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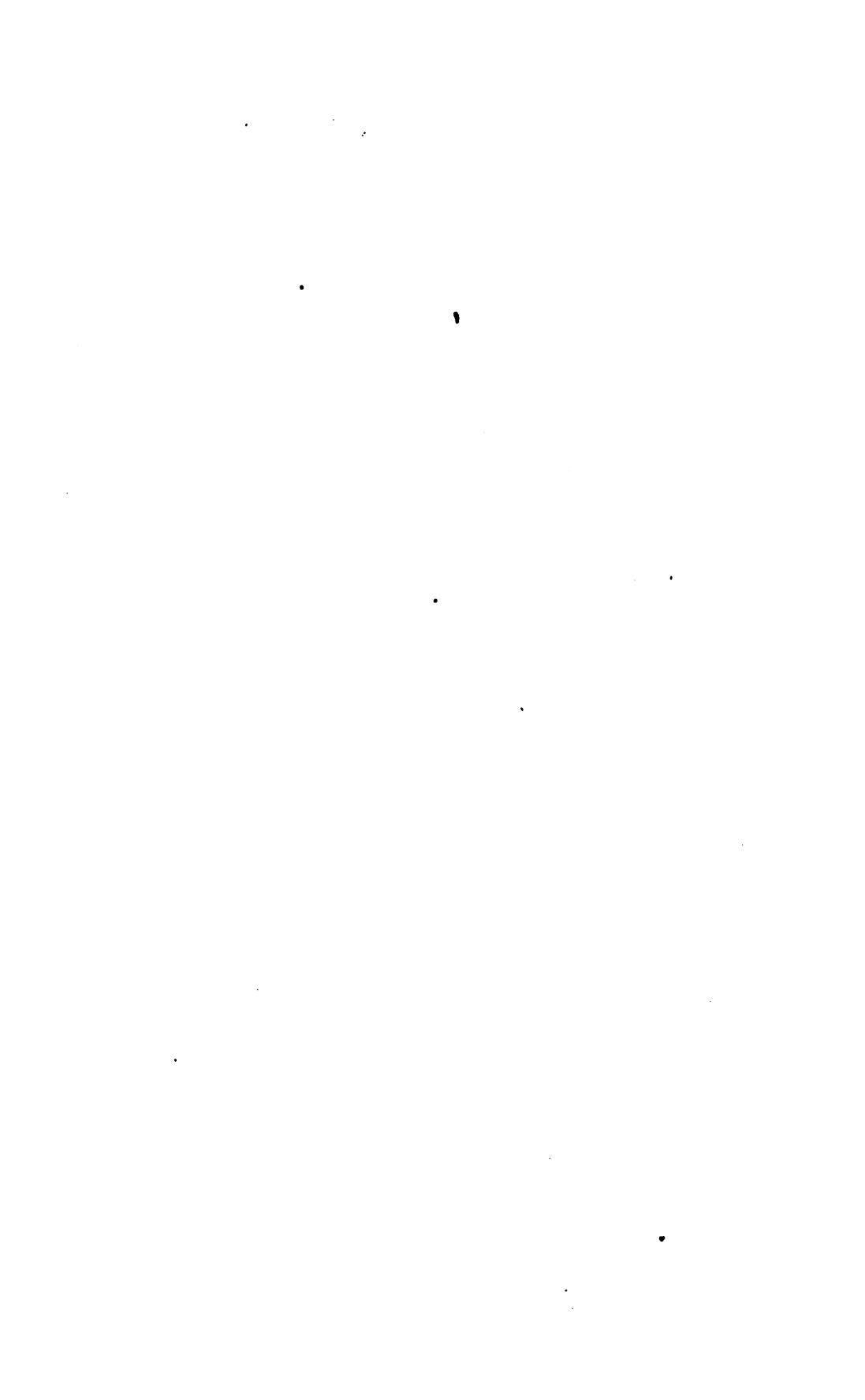


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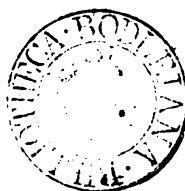
BY

A R T H U R A R N O L D,

AUTHOR OF "FROM THE LEVANT," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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Inscribed

TO THE

EARL AND COUNTESS GRANVILLE.



PREFACE.

DURING the summer of 1875, my wife and I left London, intending to travel through Russia and Persia. In the following Chapters I have transcribed our notes, commencing at Warsaw. From Poland we passed to St. Petersburgh, and from the Russian capital southwards to Astrakhan. We traversed the Caspian Sea from extreme north to south, and, landing at Enzelli, rode through the whole length of Persia—a distance of more than a thousand miles. Leaving the Caspian Sea early in October, we arrived at the Persian Gulf in February. In March we were in Bombay; in April at Alexandria.

Had I chosen a Persian title for these notes of travel, I would have taken “Zil-ullah,” which is assumed by the two great Sovereigns of the Mahomedan world. Nazr’ed’déen, Kajar, Shah of Persia, and Abd-ul-Hamid, Sultan of Turkey, are styled, in

the high official language of their own countries, “Zil-ullah” (Shadows of God). In Christendom there is one sovereign, and only one, the Tsar, upon whom is imposed the awful burden of representing the ideal of wisdom, justice, mercy, and goodness.

Civilisation—the extension of civil rights—has taught the Western world to look with some contempt upon this assumption of supernatural dignity. It is a pretension which is doomed to fade away, and to become extinct. It dies unlamented, because it lives by force—by withholding from mankind, or at best, by holding in trust for mankind, their birth-right of liberty and responsibility; never deigning to admit that the sources of its power are other than divine.

A. A.

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THROUGH PERSIA BY CARAVAN.

CHAPTER I.

The Vistula—Warsaw—French sympathies—Partition of Poland—Passport and local regulations—The three Imperial Courts—The Turkish capitulations—The ideal Pole—The real Pole—Religion in Poland—Hôtel d'Europe—Statue of John Sobieski—Lazienki Palace—Russian government—Napoleon at Warsaw—Grodno—Wilna—“Tronfolger's Namstag.”

BY the waters of the Vistula we sat down and talked of the historical wrongs of Poland. We were on the lower bank of the river, near where the bridge of latticed iron connects the suburb of Praga with the city of Warsaw. From this point of view the situation of the capital of Russian Poland is picturesque. It was a beautiful evening in September of last year, and the rays of the setting sun gilded the stately lines of the palace, once that of Poniatowski, which stands from fifty to a hundred feet above the level of the water. The queer old houses of one of the most ancient parts of Warsaw are scattered on the slope, and the background is filled with yet higher objects—

the lofty roofs, towers, and spires of Polish churches, and the five golden cupolas of the Russian Cathedral.

Rafts of pine timber, cargoes of ruddy apples and dark-green melons, float before us; the river has nearly the width of the Thames at Putney, but nowhere the beauty of our metropolitan stream; it comes to where we sit, visible afar in its course through flat, sandy lands, a silvery streak, and as we mount the rising ground into Warsaw, we can trace its flow, burnished by the dying sunlight, as it passes away through a country equally destitute of charms or of high cultivation.

Arrived at the top of the slope leading to the bridge, we are in the principal street of Warsaw, which, indeed, in its entire length is composed of two streets—the Krakowski Przedmiesci, or Faubourg de Cracovie, as the French-loving people of Warsaw call it, and the Nowy Swiat, or Rue de Nouveau Monde, as the more fashionable shopkeepers at once inform any stranger. There must be thousands of people in Warsaw who would be glad to see the defeat of Sedan and the annexation of Metz avenged and reversed. There is an air and natural gaiety in the manner of the people which make one almost ready to forget that the broad expanse of the German Empire lies between this city and France, to which, of all foreign lands, the Polish sympathies are given. With the exception of the tramway-cars, which look

like English second-class railway carriages, the vehicles have caught this gay and lively air. The queer-shaped omnibuses, like a landau and small omnibus pressed together, are as bright as red and yellow can make them. Occasionally one sees dashing through the crowd the equipage of some Russian official, the flat-capped and petticoated driver holding the reins *à la Russe*, one in each hand, steering his fast-trotting horses with marvellous skill and address, and with no need of whip.

There are some populations which it seems impossible to fancy as living in apparent happiness and gaiety together with their conquerors. For my own part, I can imagine the Battle of Dorking a reality, and conceive the occupation of London by foreign soldiery; but I cannot picture to myself holiday-making Londoners in the Tower of London by permission of alien sentries, nor merry parties on the hills of Hampstead and Sydenham and Muswell cracking nuts and jokes as they looked down upon London, the prey of a foreign foe. I can better frame for the mind's eye the debonair populace of Paris disporting in the Bois, under the guardianship of Germans, than Berliners happy in the Thiergarten while the Unter den Linden was patrolled by French. The Italians would be lighter-hearted in such circumstances ; and the Poles exhibit their affinity of race by all that the traveller sees in Warsaw.

The partition of Poland is now something more than an accomplished fact—it is part of the settled distribution of the continent of Europe. Nearly a hundred years have passed away since “Freedom shrieked” at the fall of Kosciusko and of Warsaw. Generations have matured to which the independence of Poland is but a dim tradition—generations which have followed the road to comfort and prosperity, by subservience to the Russian Power. Yet the rule of Russia has been harsh, and there has been no disposition, at least until the last few years, to conceal the character of the claim by right of which Russia rules in Warsaw. The insurrection of fourteen years ago is outwardly forgotten, yet in many a Polish heart there must be rankling memory of the cruel time when the ferocious tyranny of the Russian General Mouravieff evoked remonstrance from England. The older rebellions are commemorated in Warsaw. The insolence of conquest could not look more grim than in the blunt and stunted obelisk, supported on lions, which was erected in 1841 upon the Saski Place, in memory of the “loyal” Poles and of “their fidelity to their sovereign.”

We have been visitors in Paris and in Rome during a state of siege, but when the Germans were at St. Denis, and the army of Versailles at Neuilly—when Garibaldi was in arms at Mentana, and the newly-invented Chassepot had “*fait merveille*” upon the

bodies of men which were yet unburied, it was easier to enter or quit either of those cities than it is to find acceptance in time of peace as a visitor in Warsaw. The penalties are dreadful for those who receive a stranger without at once giving notice to the police of his country and his quality. No hotel exists without a passport bureau; and travellers are not "ushered," as reporters say, into their apartments, but are rather "interned" to await, on Polish food, the good pleasure of the Russian police as to their liberty within the city, and the time of their departure. If their passports do not bear the *visé* of the Russian Legation in their country, they will be required to spend a good deal of time in a shuttlecock existence between the police-office and their hotel. They will be teased with formalities, which of course a well-informed conspirator would easily avoid.

In fact, the inhabitants, temporary and resident of Warsaw, live in a fortress, under special licence from the police and the Governor-General. One notices in the streets that not only for convenience, but "by order," every shopkeeper must inscribe in Russian whatever name and business he chooses to set up in the native language. If on the right hand of his shop-window he writes, in the letters which are common to most of the languages of Europe—"Konicz, Tailleur, Chapeaux de Paris, la Dernière Mode, Style Elégante," he must on the left side, or

elsewhere, communicate to all whom it may concern the same announcement in the semi-barbarous characters of the Russian language. One is everywhere reminded that Warsaw is Russian, not Polish ; that Russian soldiers form the garrison ; that Russian is the official language ; that the Russo-Greek Church imparts the official religion of this essentially Roman-Catholic Poland. There would be little perhaps to recall to mind the fact that here is a suppressed nationality, were not the vital difference of religion ever present to remind the stranger of the history of this part of Europe.

The partition of Poland is the fundamental bond of union, drawing together the alliance of "the three Imperial Courts," "who," in the language of the Berlin Memorandum, "believe themselves called upon to concert among themselves measures for averting the dangers of the situation" in Turkey ; "who," when united, are absolutely masters of that situation, and can be subject to the interference of other Great Powers only in their dissensions. The three Emperors, who, if they agree, can, without reference to any other Power, impose their own solution of the Eastern Question upon the world, are first of all united in that transaction which gave to Prussia her Roman Catholic provinces upon the Baltic ; to Russia the central district, of which Warsaw is the chief city ; and to Austria, Cracow and Galicia. No

more effectual mode of insuring the extinction of Poland as a separate State could have been devised ; and, in fact, Poland has ceased to exist. There is not even a quiver in the divided limbs ; Poles must be Prussian, Russian, or Austrian, if they wish for a successful career. He who climbs towards the prizes must wear the colours of the sovereignty ; and so it usually happens that acquiescence and contentment follow conquest. This was manifest even in the short-lived annexations of the First Napoleon. I have heard of Garibaldi that he, an Italian of Italians, was in fact born a Frenchman ; that in Nice, under the First Empire, it was the wish of prudent parents that their children should talk French, and that the tongue of Molière, rather than that of Dante, was the language in which he first learned to speak.

Poland is dismembered, but in religion she is united ; and undoubtedly the preservation of peace in the North of Europe has some assurance in the circumstance that her religion is not that of Russia nor that of Prussia. Austrians have always had a hold on the sympathy of Poles, which neither Russia nor Germany can attain, in the fact that both turn to Rome as the fountain of their religious faith. Perhaps it is owing to this communion in religion that the rule of Austria in her Polish dominions has been milder ; although there can be no doubt that in part this has been the result of policy—of a desire to en-

gender envy on the side of Russian Poland—so that in the event of war, Austria might rely upon the detention of a large Russian force in and around Warsaw. The Austrian Poles have neither Falck Laws nor a schismatic Church connected with the Government to which they are subject; and in a conglomerate Empire, in which there is unavoidably some confusion of tongues, the Government is not impelled by that irritating desire to impose the official language which marks the rule of Russia and of Prussia. The Tsar is doubtless aware of the leaning of some among his Polish subjects towards his Austrian brother, who is to a certain extent protected in his ambition upon the Danube by the probability that he could raise revolt in Warsaw by promising Poland autonomy like that of Hungary. Indeed, the more we examine the condition of Poland, the more convinced shall we become that it is the centre upon which reposes the concord of the three Imperial Courts; and that but for the present settlement of Poland we might have less ground for confidence in their pacific resolutions.

As for ourselves, and in connexion with the politics of the East of Europe, it will possibly surprise not a few Englishmen to learn that for the peculiar privileges, “capitulations” as they are called, by which our intercourse with the Ottoman Empire is regulated, and under which Englishmen live and carry on business in Turkey, we are as much indebted to the Poles as to any other people. These concessions, the

existence of which has always proclaimed the infirmity of Mahomedan rule, were not made to us or at any bidding from our Foreign Office. They date, as we learn from Mr. Hertzlet's compilation,* from a time when England was not a great Power in the East. Two hundred years ago—in 1675—"an extension to British subjects of privileges granted to French, Poles, Venetians" was conceded, "by command of the Emperor and Conqueror of the Earth, achieved with the assistance of the Omnipotent, and with the special grace of God—We, who by the Divine Grace, assistance, will, and benevolence now are the King of Kings of the World, the Prince of Emperors of every age, the Dispenser of Crowns to monarchs, and the Champion ;" and it is in right of this extension of privileges originally granted to "French, Poles, Venetians" that our consular courts exercise judgment and authority in Turkey and in Egypt. Every historical student must have noticed how the use of such high-sounding titles, such pretences to a quasi-Divine sovereignty fade away at the dawn and in the increase of civilisation ; but perhaps there is no more remarkable example on record than that which is afforded by a comparison of the Sultan's style and titles in the Treaty above referred to, with the simple designation of a successor in the Caliphate, Abd-ul-Medjid, in the Treaty of 1856, where the Sultan is,

* "Treaties, &c., regulating Trade between Great Britain and Turkey."

in French fashion, merely styled “Emperor of the Ottomans.”

Having thus connected Poland with ourselves, especially in our relations with the chief of Mahomedan Powers, let us turn again to that shadow of her former self, which is seen in and about her ancient capital, of which the history mounts to the twelfth century. Those who were young children thirty years ago had at that time perhaps very much the same conception of an ideal Pole, an ideal which has possibly lingered in their thoughts through life. My notion of a Pole was of one who passed his time in the severest practice of the most noble exhibitions of personal honour and patriotism ; of one who was generally in chains, often in Siberia, who had a most romantic visage, an elegant figure, a very picturesque costume, a coat all frogged and braided, a brilliant scarf, very high boots as suitable for dancing as for striding over the corpses of his oppressors, and a painful, oft-renewed acquaintance with the knout, as wielded by Russian executioners. I will venture to add that in my own case Mr. *Punch* is responsible for perverting this idea. In the days of the late Lord Dudley Stuart, that zealous friend of Polish refugees, Mr. *Punch*, by the pencil of Leech and others, gave me to understand that a Pole was an alien creature, who inhabited London in the neighbourhood of Soho and Leicester Square, chiefly with the object of stealing

the hat or overcoat of paterfamilias upon the front door of an English house being opened to his petition, and whose loftier vocation was that of making love upon the smallest opportunity to any eligible young lady, with a view to an elopement and to enjoying after marriage any patrimony which might fall into the lap of the bride. Mr. *Punch*, it may be observed, is never very kind to people who are dissatisfied with the Government of their country. But let that pass. There was another circumstance in the life of the Pole of my childish imagination which has long since been dispelled. I thought him an inhabitant of craggy hills and lovely dales, living always in sight of high mountains and deep forests, a country like that in which dwell the insurgents of the Herzegovina, like those countries with which, from the almost invariable success of insurrection in mountainous regions, it is perhaps natural for untaught intelligence to surround the ideal insurgent. The Pole is in fact the laborious cultivator of a sandy plain, which would be a desert if it were in a rainless country two thousand miles south of Poland ; he is pinched and poor—as a tiller of sand is likely to be—and, to say the truth, he is very ignorant and terribly bigoted—a neglected child in education and a priest-led fanatic in religion.

Standing not long ago beside the open door of the Roman Catholic cathedral of Warsaw, I noticed that

all who were neither Jews nor Russian soldiers uncovered as they passed, while not a few prostrated themselves upon the damp and dirty pavement making humblest obeisance to the distant altar. A droschky driver, whose restive horse and nervous "fare" demanded all his attention, would not pass but with bare head; the country carter doffed his cap; the porter dropped his load; even the schoolboy paused to make his mark of homage; some kissed the sacred threshold of the door; all who had leisure seemed to enter. Quite a common sight in the Roman Catholic churches of Poland is a prostration like that of the Moslems, with the knees and forehead resting on the pavement. The Papal religion and national sympathies have always been close companions in Poland, and it is probably true that many a fanatic has also been what is called a rebel. Looking to the intensity and superstitious character of the devotion in these Polish churches, one is almost surprised that there are not miracles *à la mode* in Warsaw. Perhaps the Tsar and Prince Gortschakoff do not approve of Roman Catholic miracles, though they would hardly put the seal of their authority to the French couplet—

De par du Roy, défense à Dieu,
De faire miracle dans ce lieu.

Warsaw is one of the cities which "have been." It wants "cleaning up," as I heard an English lady say in the Nowy Swiat. It is nearly as foul as some

parts of Berlin in regard to open drains coursing beside the pavements of the streets, and we noticed, not as a sign of progress, that men were watering a principal thoroughfare with the familiar pot and "rose" of our English gardens. But the people who invented the polka and the mazurka, are, perhaps, lifted above sanitary considerations and a policy of sewage. The streets of Warsaw will certainly match those of any city of the world for pretty names. Some British novelist will be indebted to me for suggesting as the name of his next heroine that of a chief street—"Dluga;" or "Freta," that of another main street. But the great, new, unpeopled way, is called after a lady who has consented to become English—"Alexandrovna." Except in the houses of the very poor, there is great liberality of space in and about Warsaw. Of the hotels in Europe older than the second half of the nineteenth century, the Hôtel d'Europe of Warsaw must be one of the largest. It is quadrangular in plan, and upon each of the floors there is an utterly unfurnished corridor at least ten feet wide.

The gardens in and about the city are pretty well kept; I know of no town which has in its midst a more pleasant and ornamental garden than that which adjoins the Saski Place in Warsaw; and the park surrounding the Lazienski Palace is more wooded and undulating than Hyde Park or the Bois

de Boulogne. This suburban palace, in a most charming site between a lake and woods, was built in 1754 for King Poniatowski. In style, it is an Italian villa, and the decorations include mosaics from Rome and Florence. In the grounds, which are studded with summer houses and pavilions, perhaps the most notable object is an equestrian statue of John Sobieski by a native artist.

If an Englishman discusses the past and present condition of Poland with a Russian, the latter is sure to introduce the state of Ireland by way of comparison, and will undoubtedly believe and maintain that the manifestation of political opinion is no more free in Ireland than in Poland. Apropos of this well-worn comparison, the sight of the statue of John Sobieski reminded us of what we had seen a few weeks before in Dublin. Some days after the termination of the inharmonious proceedings in connexion with the O'Connell Centenary, we noticed, in riding through the streets of Dublin, an uncared-for, neglected remnant of the Home Rule procession in the shape of a green handkerchief which still encircled the neck of the statue of Mr. Smith O'Brien. Fancy what would happen to the daring enthusiast who should venture to tie the colours of revolutionary Poland around the collar of John Sobieski, or to the officer who, seeing this manifestation accomplished, should fail for one unnecessary moment to remove

the irritating symbol ! What a rattle of swords ; what a jingling of spurs there would be among the long-coated Russian officers, who are omnipresent in Warsaw, smoking always and in nearly every street ! What a flutter of paper there would be at the head-quarters of Russian government, in the city palace of Poniatowski, that dull quadrangle of stone which we looked at from the Praga side of the Vistula, where the Russian Viceroy lives. The hapless man would soon meet the forms of Russian justice, administered in a language incomprehensible to him, and punishment proportioned to Russian estimate of his offence. I can see him, as I have seen others, marched off, chained in company with base criminals, to Siberia, his wife and children being permitted, if they please, to accompany him at the expense of the Government to that inhospitable region, the rigours of which cannot be understood by those who have only seen the northern plains of Central Asia during the transient brightness of the brief summer.

At Warsaw, in a back street, stands the hotel in which the First Napoleon is said to have rested in his flight from Moscow ; of that great tragedy we were reminded again, when, after crossing the sandy plain from Warsaw, the name of Grodno was shouted by Russian railway men. It was dark and late when we arrived at Wilna, where Napoleon deserted the remnant of his army, and galloped off towards

France—and Elba. Between the railway station and the principal street of Wilna, the wall of the town intervenes, and high over the gateway, which forms the main entrance, is a small chapel dedicated to the mother of Jesus Christ, which is an object of worship, quite in its way as superstitious as was ever paid to the gods of ancient Greece or Egypt; with the difference that this guardian of the town is in herself and in the ornaments with which she is surrounded, an exhibition of art in forms at once mean and base. This tawdry shrine faces the street, which descends rapidly from the gateway, and through all the hours of the day, and through many of the night, the sloping pavements are crowded with worshippers, gazing, some with the touching, tender, wistfulness of anxious maternity, some with the doubting, half-despairing hope for spiritual aid to be rid of deadly-clinging vice, some with the look of prosperity upon them, whose desire is evidently to make the best of both worlds, and who especially wish to have the savour of piety in this world; others with the misery of neglected old age, blinking and muttering their formulas, their hopes and wants, with their ideas of the Infinite subdued and compressed within the lines of this vulgar image.

Our Polish driver, like every one else of the same nationality, held his hat in his hand as he approached, passed through, and descended from, this chapelled

archway. Within the town there was a curious and by us quite unexpected illumination. At regular intervals of two or three yards, there were lighted lanterns placed in the gutter on both sides of the streets. We drove a long distance through this curious manifestation, which was further exhibited by lighted candles placed in a few of the windows, without knowing the event which it was intended to honour. At the hotel, a German-speaking waiter replied : “*Tronfolger's Namstag.*” It was the birthday of Alexandrowitch, heir to the Throne of all the Russias.





CHAPTER II.

Russian Railway carriages—Russian ventilation—Dunaburg—White sand—Droschky tickets—St. Petersburgh—Exaggerated praise—Newski Prospekt—The Hermitage—Winter Palace—St. Isaac's Church—The old Cathedral—Tombs of the Romanoffs—Down the Neva—Cronstadt—Droschky driving—The Gostinnoi Dvor—The Kazan church—The Russian language—The road to Moscow.

A RUSSIAN railway-carriage resembles a gipsy wagon, in having a stove-pipe issuing from the roof, and a succession of these chimnies attracts the notice of any one who is for the first time travelling in the dominions of the Tsar. Fortunately, the stoves were not lighted on the mild September evening in which we set out for St. Petersburgh—I say fortunately, because the Russian notion of a fire is to enjoy its warmth without ventilation. Russian climate is the coldest, Russian rooms and railway carriages the hottest, in Europe. Our train stayed a few minutes at Dunaburg, time enough to eat one of the excellent veal cutlets which are always hot and ready for travellers. But at daybreak, when we took coffee at Luga, in the raw and foggy morning, the guard needed the warm gloves in which he took the tickets. One notices, as a sign of the severity of the climate,

how kindly people take to gloves whose equals in England would be unable to do their work with their hands so covered. White sand, grey sand, the face of the country is covered with sand in the north of Russia; flat sand, hidden for the most part with scanty crops, and with wide forest patches of fir, the sombre hues of which are occasionally varied with the more tender green and the silvery bark of birch trees.

There is nothing interesting or picturesque in the approach to the Russian capital. One looks out to see the golden domes and spires, and is not disappointed. There from afar shines the gilded cupola of St. Isaac's Church, and there, like golden needles, glitter the spires of the Admiralty, and of the old cathedral in which all the greatest of the House of Romanoff lay buried. Soon we are at the station, where the uninformed or incautious traveller, who rushes at the nearest droschky driver to secure his carriage, will be disappointed. They manage these things otherwise in Russia. One must look out for the official on the steps of the station, whose hands are filled with numbered plates, and the only cab the traveller can engage is that of which the number is received from this person.

St. Petersburgh has been often described, but generally in language of exaggerated admiration. It certainly possesses that feature, without which there

can be no grandeur in town or city—that feature of space which we are slowly and successfully, though at an enormous cost, giving to London. I should say that the clear and flowing waters of the Neva, sweeping in ample width through the city, form the chief advantage and ornament of St. Petersburgh. But for that over-praised pile of stucco, the Winter Palace, I have no admiration ; and as for the treasures of the Hermitage Museum, they cannot bear comparison in richness or interest with those of more southern cities. The streets are wide, the pavement in the roads is execrable, the shops are gay only in the Newski Prospekt, and there is no more antiquity than in Boston or New York. St. Petersburgh is not a handsome city, after the manner of Vienna and Paris, for those cities have, at every turn, the results of high civilisation and a genial climate, which are lacking in the Russian capital.

Before entering the Winter Palace one must visit a den somewhere about the foundations—a place reeking with tobacco-smoke—in which Russian officers sit to deliver the necessary permission, and the glories of this florid wilderness of stucco are supposed to culminate in the semi-barbaric resplendence of the golden boudoir of the Empress, a small apartment, of which the ceiling, the walls, and even the doors are gilded. No wonder the Emperor Nicholas took refuge and comfort in his plain apartments, the

furniture of which remains as it stood in his lifetime! So entirely is the *status quo* preserved, that his Majesty's cloak and hat, his sword and gloves, are in the places they occupied in his lifetime.

There is one exception to the buildings of St. Petersburgh which, if we overlook some of its internal decorations, appears worthy of all praise. The Church of St. Isaac is, in my opinion, the noblest building of modern times, and one of which not half enough has been said in Europe by way of eulogy. Perhaps it is not difficult to account for the misplaced adulation of Russian palaces. The "special correspondents," who are sent to St. Petersburgh on great occasions, have their eyes fixed upon the ceremonies of the Court, and there can be no doubt that the Russian Court is seen to great advantage by the soft glare of thousands of wax candles. It is unquestionably true that the Winter Palace "lights up well," better even than the White Hall of the old Schloss of Berlin, and with far finer effect than the comparatively small apartments of English royalty. It must be owing to the effect of wax lights on the brain that, in accounts of St. Petersburgh, the stuccoed gewgaws of the Winter Palace, and the veneered lapis-lazuli and malachite of the Hermitage, have obscured the grand and solid magnificence of St. Isaac's—a building most worthy of the golden crown which, with vast circumference, domes the centre of this splendid edifice,

which has been completed during the present reign. The style is Byzantine, that mixture of Greek and Romanesque architecture which is perhaps the best suited to the northern climate; and though smaller than St. Paul's in London, or St. Peter's in Rome, St. Isaac's is more massive in construction.

St. Peter's has some monoliths, pillaged from temples of the ancient city, but none that can compare with the polished columns of Finland granite which support the four porticoes of St. Isaac's, and there is nothing in the elevation of either of those world-famous churches more admirable than the bronze statuary with which the tympanum of each one of the pediments of these porticoes is adorned, or than the compositions which, placed upon the wings of these pediments, vary with excellent effect the outlines of the church. In solidity, the masonry is not surpassed by any ancient work, and the splendid interior is only disappointing because its permanent decorations are somewhat too substantial, and its religious ornaments out of harmony with the grandeur of a building in which the spectacle of crowds smacking their lips upon the trumpery portraits of persons, some of them obscure, and sanctified after a narrow-minded life, spent for the most part in dirt and asceticism, is especially ridiculous, if not irritating.

The church in which the predecessors of the Tsar are buried is comparatively insignificant, and the

tombs of the Emperors are simple parallelograms, built with plain slabs of white marble, with not the least attempt at artistic style or ornament. The young soldier who acted as our guide in this church, pointed to the graves of Peter the Great, of Nicholas I., and of the eldest son of the present Tsar as those most interesting. The Romanoffs rest beneath trophies of battle in the shape of flags, including those of most nations, the Union Jack among the number, a flag, perhaps, taken from the *Tiger* when that unfortunate vessel, having grounded in a fog off Odessa, was, during the Crimean War, surrendered by Captain Giffard to the Russian General Osten-Sacken.

From all that we saw in steaming down the Neva, and at Cronstadt, I should suppose Sir Charles Napier could see the highest pinnacles of St. Petersburgh while he was forced to respect the range of those ugly fortresses. . But that was in the unarmoured, muzzle-loading days. What would happen now in a real fight between floating fortresses of iron and stationary fortresses of stone it is not for me to say; but at least this much is certain, that the conditions of naval warfare are entirely altered since the time when Sir Charles made his famous speech, ending with “Sharpen your cutlasses, lads, and the day is your own!” It seems that in our time the “Shiver my timbers!” of Marryat’s age would be as little out of

place as the "Sharpen your cutlasses" of 1854. "Ram often and ram home!" is more likely to be the watch-word of the future.

From the front of the Admiralty House in St. Petersburg one can look down the whole length of the Newski Prospekt, a mile and a half or so, to the Moscow Railway Station. Among the many "cures" which English physicians now prescribe, including mud-baths and grape cures, and the diligent drinking, as in Russia and Germany, of mares' milk fermented, I wonder no one has suggested driving up and down the Newski Prospekt, or, better still, the back streets of the Russian capital, in a droschky as a "cure" for a sluggish liver. Such a shaking can be obtained nowhere else. The ride has other advantages for gentlemen whose hearts and hands are free. Convenience and obvious custom may be pleaded for encircling a lady's waist with an arm when the jangling, rattling vehicle is occupied by one of each sex; this mode is indulged in not only from occasional necessity as the only means of keeping a light body on the seat of the droschky, but it is further almost obligatory on account of the smallness of the seat, which, though often occupied by two, is probably constructed only for one person. The journey down the Newski Prospekt may be broken at the Gostinnoi Dvor, or great bazaar, an institution in Russian towns, a reminiscence probably of Tartardom, that bygone

state of Muscovite existence which, it has been said, may easily be re-discovered by scratching a Russian. The Gostinnoi Dvor of St. Petersburgh is a well-built quadrangular arcade of shops, of which, perhaps, the most interesting to a stranger are those of the furriers; for as a rule there are but few native products or manufactures in Russian shops, or it would be more correct to say, few possessing any uncommon interest or original character. There is plenty of bad hardware, that of Birmingham being excluded by high tariffs, but where there is seen rich display of taste in any of the St. Petersburgh shops, the work is sure to be French. Russian garments of fur are little suited for English wear, because of a radical difference in the usages of the two countries. In England fur is worn partly for ornament, and consequently the hair is turned outwards, in Russia it is always reversed, and the fur concealed beneath the outward cloth of the garment. And it is noticeable that the fur mostly used in England—sealskin—is not met with in the St. Petersburgh bazaar. If any one wishes to put as much money as possible into a fur-coat—a “shuba” as this indispensable part of the wardrobe of a gentleman is called in the Russian language—let him order, in the Gostinnoi Dvor, one of the fur of the “blue” fox; it will be worth much more than its weight in silver roubles. Close by is the Kazan Church, another pile of stucco, concerning

the silver altar rails of which the guide books make a terrible, unwarranted fuss. As these famous rails are short, hollow, and plain as a pikestaff, their glorification is somewhat absurd. That which is much more curious in this church is the collection of keys of surrendered towns and the gilded and jewelled screen—the Ikonostas—standing between the rails and the sanctuary of the church, that ecclesiastical threshold which no woman may cross.

But we had better leave the eccentricities of the Russo-Greek Church for the present, and get on from St. Petersburgh to Moscow—a journey which, owing to the railway arrangements, English travellers usually make by night. Every one who has wandered much in the South of Europe will have met with Russians unable to speak the language of their country, and from the number of these it might be inferred that in Russia the use of the vernacular was exclusively confined to the lower classes. It remains true, however, that in Russia there is no language so useful as Russian, though from Cronstadt to Sebastopol the traveller who can speak German is never in great difficulty. By many of the higher classes, and at a few of the most fashionable shops, French is spoken, but German is unquestionably more useful in travelling. When morning dawns upon the mail train as it approaches the more ancient capital of Russia, there is very much the same landscape in the neighbour-

hood of Moscow, as that which meets the eye in coming to St. Petersburgh from the west : the same sand from which laborious peasants scratch a scanty crop ; the same forests of fir and birch in which princes and nobles delight to hunt the grizzly bear. All is flat and uninteresting ; one shivers in the cold of May or September, and begins to comprehend what a reservoir of warmth is the tossing sea, how bitterly cold in winter are those vast, sandy, waterless plains, which, with the aid of rain, are coaxed to cultivation in the North, but in the extreme South of the Empire are seen and known as barren steppes, yielding nothing but a sense of bigness to the Russian Empire.





CHAPTER III.

Moscow—The native Capital of Russia—The Kitai-Gorod—Lubianka Street—The Kremlin—The Holy Gate—The Redeemer of Smolensk—Bell Tower of Ivan—Church Bells—Church of the Assumption—Dean Stanley's description—The Coronation Platform—The Virgin of Vladimir—Corner Tombs—The Young Demetrius—John the Terrible—The Tsar Kolokol—The Foundling Hospital—Nurses and babies—“*Nés avant Termé*”—Moral and social results—Cathedral of St. Basil—John the Idiot—The Lobnoé Město—Iverskaya Chasovnia—How the Metropolitan is paid—Virgin from Mount Athos—Tsar and Patriarch—Motto from Troitsa.

MOSCOW is unlike any other city; not only in its walls, its towers, its cupolas, its churches, but in its streets and houses, its hospitals and its populace. He has not seen Russia who has never been to Moscow. Of countries more advanced in civilisation—of constitutional Spain and Greece—he too has seen little who knows but the capital. Modern Athens is a reproduction of Munich, and to see the chief Spanish town one must go to Seville, not to Frenchified Madrid. The human heart of Moscow lies within the walls of the Kitai-Gorod, the Chinese town as it is called, “Kitai” being Chinese for “centre;” just as the Orthodox and Imperial heart is

found in the Kremlin. The encircling walls of the latter exclude the town just as the walls of the Kitai-Gorod shut out the suburbs, where wealthy Moscow lives, sometimes in pretty villas. After the fire in 1812, which did not efface these girdles, Moscow dragged herself up again without regard to any great improvement of plan, and the streets are so irregular that the easiest thing in the world is to lose oneself in the narrow limits of the Kitai-Gorod, in which nearly all the shopkeeping and the whole of the mercantile business of Moscow are carried on.

From the Kremlin, or Acropolis of Moscow, which stands on a bank rising steeply about a hundred feet above the river from which the city takes its name, the ground slopes gently through the Kitai-Gorod to the Lubianka Street, from his house in which Count Rostopchin announced to the terrified people that the Russian garrison would make way for the French army. In passing to the Kremlin from this street, one enters the "Chinese town" through a gateway in the massive wall of brick, and if he is a Russian, uncovers before the little church on the left hand, which is one of those curious edifices that are seen nowhere beyond the pale of the Greek Church—a tiny building, the roof of which, with eaves that scarcely escape the hats of those who are passing by, is tortured into the most unexpected shapes and angles; here a little cupola and there a crocket, a confusion of

the architecture of a pagoda and of a Lombard church, with tiles coloured red, blue, green, and yellow, in tints sobered and softened by age into a curious beauty. The ornamental little windows are not needed, for the diminutive church is ventilated only by the frequent opening of the door, and as for light, there is that of the lamps and candles which are constantly burning.

In point of superstition, I see no superiority in the lower classes of Russia over those of Spain. With the latter, their religion is for the most part symbolised by wooden dolls, blackened with age, such as "Our Ladies" of Atocha and Montserrat. With the Russians, solid images are not permitted, and the symbols of their faith are generally worthless pictures made to resemble images as much as possible by having robes wrought in thin gold or silver, placed over the painting upon that part of the person where such garments would be worn in life. The celebrated gate in the wall of the Kremlin, to which one ascends by the slope leading from the Kitai-Gorod, is famous because a picture of this sort—"The Redeemer of Smolensk" as it is called—is suspended over the high archway of brick. With an opera-glass one can discern a representation of the typical face of Christ, decked in golden garb and nimbus. It is barely permitted, even in these days, that any one may pass under this archway except uncovered. Jews and Mahomedans

generally find some less sacred portal ; and the Tsar himself never enters the Kremlin by this “Redeemer Gate” with his hat upon his head. The tower above the gateway—a Gothic structure upon Italian fortifications—is suggestive of much that one sees in Russia. The traveller who expects to find grand buildings upon the Kremlin, will be grievously disappointed. They are interesting, because they are national—because they are unique and curious ; but that is all. Highest rises the octagonal bell-tower of Ivan the Great ; the bells, as is usual throughout Russia, are, as the French would say, *montés au jour*, so that bell, and tongue, and beam, and machinery, are seen from the ground, with no intervening wall or window.

The importance attached to bells in the Greek Church has been curiously illustrated in the Blue Book, containing “Correspondence respecting the Affairs of Turkey, and the Insurrection in Bosnia and the Herzegovina.” Consul Freeman reports that orders have been received at Bosnai Serai to construct a second minaret to the chief mosque. It is to be much higher than the existing one, that it may command the Orthodox church and steeple. “The execution of this work at the present time,” says the Consul, “when, notwithstanding the proclamation, the Christians are refused the permission, so ardently desired, to have bells in their churches, cannot be regarded

otherwise than as a demonstration of Mussulman fanaticism and superiority." Sir Henry Elliot communicated with the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, and reported to Lord Derby that, "before granting the permission to put up bells in the churches—which is now about to be granted, and which may create some soreness on the part of a portion of the Mussulmans—the Government considered it prudent to authorise the erection of a minaret, which should be higher than the steeple."

In Russia, as in Rome, there is a saint to be invoked upon every thought or purpose in life, and happy is he or she who remembers the right one, when a handkerchief is mislaid or a sweetheart lost. Every one knows the church in Rome close to the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, to which pet lambs and dogs, and the horses of the Pope and of the Cardinals, are taken for the blessing of their patron, St. Antonio Abbate. The chapel in the basement of the tower of Ivan, is or ought to be frequented by ladies about to marry, for it is dedicated to that particular St. Nicholas who is their appointed guardian in a country of many saints, and where the rude forms of the Anglo-Saxon action for breach of promise are happily unknown.

But pass within the commonplace iron railing which shuts off the tower from the Church of the Assumption, enter, and there is no disappointment.

One is dazzled and charmed with the spectacle. Let us hear Dean Stanley (who is disposed to look more kindly on the antics of the Greek Church than the present writer) upon the first view of this truly remarkable interior. "It is in dimensions," he says, "what in the West would be called a chapel rather than a cathedral. But it is so fraught with recollections, so teeming with worshippers, so bursting with tombs and pictures, from the pavement to the cupola" [the Dean would not have been less accurate had he used the plural number, as there are five cupolas, though that in the centre may be called *the* cupola] "that its smallness of space is forgotten in the fulness of its contents. On the platform of its nave, from Ivan the Terrible downwards to this day, the Tsars have been crowned. Along its altar-screen are deposited the most sacred pictures of Russia: that painted by the Metropolitan Peter: this sent by the Greek Emperor Manuel: that brought by Vladimir from Kherson."

The platform to which Dean Stanley thus refers is a square dais of wood, raised by one step from the floor of the church, in the centre of which it is placed. The church has no "long drawn aisles," nor any of the solemn beauty which is so admirable in the Dean's own Abbey of Westminster. The interior is a blaze of colour from floor to ceiling. The walls are gilded in all but the frescoed representations of the Seven

Councils and the Last Judgment; and the five domes are upheld by four tall circular pillars of almost unvarying diameter, which are richly gilded from pavement to arch, except where they are adorned with quaint and highly coloured portraits of martyrs.

“Time was,” wrote Cardinal Wiseman, with a well-pointed sneer, “when it needed not a coronation to fill the aisles of Westminster.” Since that was written, we have seen those aisles thronged with eager listeners to the eloquence of a Wilberforce or a Stanley. A coronation in the Uspenski Sabòr of Moscow is probably a grander sight, because of the awful power with which the new wearer of the Russian crown is—*not* invested, but invests himself. Possibly Dean Stanley was present at the coronation of Alexander II. “The coronation,” he writes, “even at the present time, is not a mere ceremony, but a historical event, and solemn consecration. It is preceded by fasting and seclusion, and takes place in the most sacred church in Russia; the Emperor, not as in the corresponding forms of European investiture, a passive recipient, but himself the principal figure in the whole scene; himself reciting aloud the confession of the Orthodox faith; himself, alone on his knees, amidst the assembled multitude, offering up the prayer of intercession for the Empire; himself placing his own crown on his own head; himself entering through the sacred door of the innermost

sanctuary, and taking from the altar the elements of bread and wine." The Tsar is at once priest and king, pretending to be that which the Persian poet Sa'di describes as the kingly office—"the Shadow of God."

The picture of "the Holy Virgin of Vladimir" is saluted by the devout as the work of St. Luke, and by the careless as bearing nearly 50,000*l.* worth of jewels, including an emerald of enormous size. The faithful, when divine service is over, walk along the altar-screen, on which this and other sacred pictures are placed, kissing them one after the other with marks of deepest devotion. These and other treasures were, of course, removed before the evacuation of Moscow, in 1812. It is quite impossible, without the aid of a series of coloured plates, to convey to the mind of any one who has not seen it an accurate notion of the interior of this church. The principal architectural feature is the appropriation of about one-third of the area to the sanctuary, the altar-screen reducing the interior space from a parallelogram to a square, in which the four frescoed columns stand equidistant from the centre. No part of the walls is unadorned with paint or gilding, and with the head well thrown back, one can see a gigantic face of Christ painted upon the inner surface of the central dome.

There are many points, and those of great and significant importance, in which, to a Protestant

mind, the Russian churches might be improved by following the example of any mosque. There can be nothing more opposed to the method of Islam than the constant exhibition of pictures, and the monstrous devotion and salutation of which these—for the most part daubs—are the object. Dean Stanley, however, notices one matter in which this great church of Moscow has followed Oriental custom—the assignment of its four corners as the places of most honoured sepulture.

The adjoining church, the Cathedral of Michael the Archangel, is more celebrated for its tombs. There lie the remains of John the Terrible, and of his murdered son Demetrius. As we entered this church we noticed that all persons appeared to direct their steps, in the first place, to a low tomb not far from the centre, and that there they bent with utmost reverence to lay their lips upon a small opening in a golden framework, a brown, parchment-like patch, which is actually the forehead of the young Demetrius. This prince achieved his present position of saintship and adoration, involving neglect of the shrine of his “Terrible” parent, in consequence of his having been murdered by order of Boris Godunof, the Tsar of that turbulent period which preceded the settlement of the Empire by the election of young Romanoff, son of the Metropolitan of Rostof, in 1613. There happened also a “miracle” which led to the

discovery of his sainted remains. Above the shrine, his portrait hangs in a massive setting of gold.

Externally the architecture of the buildings of the Kremlin is neither grand nor pleasing. It is possible that the uncommon aspect of the gilded domes, of which there are five on each of the churches above referred to, and several on other buildings, has led to the general impression, which certainly prevails, that these plain edifices are externally remarkable. The big bell, "Tsar Kolokol," claims attention as a fractured apartment (it is big enough for habitation) in bell-metal, and if the day is fine, the view from the front of the Palace of the Kremlin will command admiration. The massive wall is at this point sunk beneath the brow on which the Kremlin stands, and across the river, in the foreground of a very extended prospect, there stands a huge white building, the Foundling Hospital, to which we descended, fortunately upon the day when strangers are admitted to this vast nursery for Russian infants.

To those who know anything of the statistics of infant mortality, there is something sad and ominous in entering a huge barrack such as this, devoted to the care of wilfully-deserted infancy. The chief officer, a Russian exquisite, who conducted us over the building, spoke, and appeared to feel, like a showman. As for the inmates, he was quite unpitying. He looked for our deepest sympathy as he informed us that every day

it was his duty to walk through the well-kept wards. There is nothing to be seen like the dramatic cradle in which, at dead of night, the tearful, frightened mother deposits her new-born babe, and reels, swooning with terror and agitation into the dark background, after she has sounded, with feverish grasp, the knell of her maternal joys and anxieties. In Moscow we find the State encouraging the increase of population, and, with the least formality and utmost openness, relieving all who choose to bring their infants, from the burden, the cost and responsibilities of parentage.

Two women, friends, as they said, of the mother of the babe which one of them carried, entered the building shortly after we arrived. The child was not six hours old. According to the usual rule, there were but two questions asked—one to learn whether the child had been baptised, and if so, by what name. It was not officially a member of the Orthodox Church, and therefore was only described in the books by the number which it would from that time bear in the Foundling Hospital. This was the twenty-ninth child that had been received that day, and ten more would probably be registered before midnight. The baby was washed in a room adjoining the place of reception, dressed in the swaddling clothes of the establishment, which, unlike the long clothes of English infancy, are swathed almost tightly about the limbs, and carried upstairs, to a large, long ward,



where it was placed, feet to feet, with another baby, in a curtained cradle, about the centre of the ward, its number being hung round its neck, and also fixed on the cradle above its head. Downstairs we had seen a number of robust peasant women seeking employment as nurses in these wards. The pay and rations are so good, and there are such substantial advantages in obtaining babies as boarders when they and their wet-nurses leave the hospital, that these places are eagerly sought, and it is said that a mother not unfrequently leaves her infant, or sends it to the Hospital, and then applies for the position of nurse, in order that both may be maintained by the State.

The inspecting officer informed us that these women receive seven roubles a month and a gratuity, as a reward for good behaviour while they are serving in the Hospital; and that when they leave it is usual for them to take away a baby, to be boarded out in their family, for the care of which they are paid two roubles per month. If the children are healthy, they are usually sent out, after vaccination, when they are ten days old. Each nurse has the care of two infants lying in the same cradle. In the wards, the nurses wear a becoming uniform, with caps of scarlet. The arrangements, temperature, and cleanliness of the wards are admirable. It struck me that a little noise would have sounded more healthful and natural than the painful silence of these regiments of, for the most

part, dumb cradles. Especially was this sad feature noticeable in the sick ward, where there were many cases of ophthalmia. But the most curious of all was the ward devoted, as the foppish officer said, to "*les enfants nés avant terme*;" those which had come prematurely into the world, and were now in wadded and flannelled cradles of copper, hot-water cradles in fact, the heat of which was maintained and regulated with the most careful precision.

There may be, even in England, differences of opinion as to the morality and advantage of an institution such as this, which deals in the manner I have described with nearly 15,000 infants every year. To me it appears to be an approach, dangerous to the morality of a people, to that form of Communism which is especially to be dreaded. It rewards, at the cost of all, the deliberate desertion of the most sacred duties and obligations of parentage. It tends to degrade women by relieving them and the men with whom they associate, from the responsibilities of childbirth; it places upon the careful, affectionate, and dutiful parents, in their capacity as tax-payers, the burden of maintaining the offspring of those who have none of these virtues. On the other hand, we cannot doubt that it prevents infanticide in many cases, and promotes the peopling of the vast wastes of Russia. But it can hardly be denied that while thus encouraging population, it is indirectly respon-

sible for the deaths of thousands of infants, because it is on record that the mortality of this Hospital is terribly high, and that scarcely more than twenty-five per cent. of the infants committed to its care live to learn, as men and women, the circumstances of their childhood.

We will return to the heights of the Kremlin, from which we made this digression, and descend through the holy gate to that part of the space before the Kitai-Gorod in which stands the Cathedral of St. Basil the Blessed, a church far more remarkable in its architecture than any other in Moscow. It is said that when the First Napoleon saw this miniature cathedral, with its grotesque irregularities of outline, he ordered the commander of his artillery to "destroy that mosque." But indeed the Cathedral of St. Basil has little resemblance to a mosque. It is perhaps the best example of that queer admixture of Indo-Persian, Tartar-Chinese, and Græco-Byzantine architecture, which may fairly be called the Russian style. The Cathedral of St. Basil, of which only the crypt is used for divine service, is all towers and domes. These cupolas, or domes, in their colours of red and green, as well as in shape, resemble huge inverted onions, the upturned "root" finished with a gilded cross. Of the eleven domes, no two are alike in superficial ornamentation ; one or two are painted in bands, which will certainly suggest the vegetable comparison

above mentioned. One is indented like the surface of a pine-apple, others are decorated with patterns that are decidedly arabesque, and the highest of all is elongated with a multiplicity of ornament into something like a spire; yet perhaps the cupolas are not the most curious part of the church, of which every portion is coloured. One is hardly surprised to find the maze of small chapels above the crypt unused; they are too intricate.

The whole building does not cover more ground than the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park. Dull red and green seem to be the prevailing colours; but the church is so bewildering that one can hardly feel certain about any part of it. It is just such a church as one might suppose had been built by or for a lunatic; then it appears not inappropriate. The riddle of its architecture seems to be solved when one learns that St. Basil, though regarded by many as a prophet and worker of miracles, was probably one whom in these degenerate days we should call a harmless simpleton; and the church, fortunately uninjured by the French, was finished in the latter part of the sixteenth century by a Tsar, who, to the bones of Basil, added those of John the Idiot. In religion, the Russian people have a tenderness for lunacy and idiocy, which I suspect has now and then taken ultimately the form of canonization. John the Idiot is certainly a saint—a religious mendicant, who in his lifetime, we

are told, was known as "Water-carrier," or "Big-cap," because he was ready to bear others' burdens of water, and from the iron cap he wore. St. John the Idiot's cap was lost during the Napoleonic invasion; but the weights and chains which he and St. Basil are supposed to have used for the mortification of their life, are preserved in the chapels. At all events, their reputation is fitly enshrined in the most bizarre and fantastic church in Europe.

Of about the same date is the circular rostrum, or pulpit of stone, about four yards in diameter, with a surrounding seat inside, which stands in the large open place near the Church of St. Basil. This was the platform from which the Tsars made solemn promises, and the patriarchs administered blessings to the people. It is called Lobnoé Mèsto; and at other towns in Russia there are similar tribunes. Passing this uninteresting monument in a line from the Cathedral of St. Basil, and entering the Kitai-Gorod, one is in front of the principal entrance—the Voskreneski Gate—of the "Chinese town." Just outside that gate there is to be seen one of the most remarkable sights in Moscow—and, indeed, in all Russia. In no other European country is there such an exhibition of what is called religious devotion. Before the stout wall of brickwork, which separates the outgoing from the ingoing way, is the Iberian Chapel (*Iverskaya Chasòvnia*), architecturally nothing

but a large-sized hut of stone, or a platform raised by two steps above the roadway. From morning till night this platform is thronged, and the chapel overflows with a crowd, chiefly composed of men, pressing, all bareheaded, and all with money in their hands, towards the narrow doorway of the little sanctuary.

We were some time getting into the chapel, which will hold about ten people abreast, and is lighted by the flickering glare of a score of candles. There is a step at the further end, and the wall opposite the door is resplendent with shining metal, except where the object of this extravagant devotion looks grimy through its framework of gold. On the left side of "the Iberian Mother of God"—which is the name given to this commonplace daub, supposed to possess miraculous powers—stands a long-haired priest, now and then relieved by another long-haired, deep-voiced priest, who, hour by hour, in the name of the jewelled and tinselled picture, and with blessing, consecrates the prayers and offerings of the faithful.

Only the face of the Madonna is visible, and in the candlelight it is not easy to distinguish the features beneath the dust of years. But not a minute passes in which the rattle of money falling to the uses of the Russian Church is not heard, or in which lips are not pressed upon the framework, or upon the rudely-wrought robes of beaten gold, which conceal the picture to the neck. Surely no lower depth of super-

stitious degradation was ever reached in connexion with Christian worship! One cannot be surprised that to a Turk, a Russian seems to be an idolatrous worshipper of pictures. The refining explanation which the most enlightened fathers of the Greek Church could offer concerning this disgusting exhibition is precisely of the sort, and differs only in degree, from that which might be offered on behalf of the idol-worshippers of more eastern and southern lands. The picture has no historic reputation. It was brought from Mount Athos, that pleasant wooded hill, peopled with monkish drones, who so distrust their masculine instincts that not only may no woman enter their charming territory, and enjoy the lovely view seaward over the blue Levant, but no hen may be brought to their table; though it is not on record that they refuse eggs which, if hatched, would produce female birds. About 12,000*l.* a year is collected in coppers at this chapel, and from this sum the salary of the Metropolitan of Moscow is paid. Time has been when in the ceremonies which precede Easter, the Tsar of Russia used to lead the donkey on which the Patriarch of Moscow rode, carrying a sacred chalice and a copy of the Gospels; nowadays that ceremony is neglected, but we are given to understand that the Tsar never enters Moscow without assisting the revenues of this distinguished ecclesiastical officer,

by praying at the shrine of the “Iberian Mother of God.” In reading Dean Stanley’s “Lectures on the Eastern Church,” I am disposed to wonder at the patience with which he tolerates degrading and grossly superstitious observances. I cannot pretend to equal moderation in sight of these things. It may be that he has taken to heart, as I cannot, the archiepiscopal inscription near the famous monastery of Troitsa:—“Let not him who comes in here carry out the dirt that he finds within.”





CHAPTER IV.

The road to Nijni—Rivers Oka and Volga—Nijni—The Bridge of Boats—The Heights of Nijni—Lopachev's Hotel—A famous landscape—Prisoners for Siberia—Their wives and children—The Great Fair—The last bargains—Caravan tea—Persian merchants—Buildings of the Fair—Gloves and furs—Russian tea-dealers—Mosque at Nijni—Shows and theatre—Russia *v.* free-trade—Russian hardware—Articles de Paris—Melons and grapes—The Governor's Palace—Picturesque Nijni.

THOUGH it is only the 20th of September, the air is keen and frosty as we drive to the Moscow station of the Nijni Novgorod Railway. We have a sleepy recollection of the comfort of some hot soup at Vladimir. When we awoke in the morning, at no great distance from Nijni, the window glasses of the railway carriage were covered with hoar frost, and the ground was hard as iron. We soon beheld the Volga, flowing in a broad yellowish stream past the height on which the official town of Nijni stands, and from the opposite side of the carriage as we approach the buildings of the world-famous Fair, we can see the lesser stream of the river Oka in its course to the point where it gives itself to the Volga, the site of the Fair being upon the

angle between the two rivers. The sun was shining warmly, and the rugged pavement in the main street of the Fair was ankle-deep in mud which our rattling droschky threw up on all sides. The driver, like all Russian coachmen, had his coat gathered at the waist, and sat upon the ample skirts with a rein of rope in each hand, “p-r-r-r-r-ing” his horses along at a rate which would be punishable in London. It is, however, done at Nijni, though there upon the road are crowded carts loaded with cotton, tea and melons, and people of every Eastern nation, many of whom come from lands where a wheel is never seen, where merchandise is of necessity carried by mules or camels.

What a thundering the scampering hoofs of our horses and the rumble of our wheels seem to make as we pass on to the planked bridge of boats by which we must cross the Volga to reach the town of Nijni Novgorod! From this point, the view of the town is very picturesque. Close to the bridge, the ground rises abruptly to a height of about two hundred and fifty feet, and the summit is crowned with the chief buildings of the place. Overlooking the river, the united stream of the Volga and the Oka, there is the white-walled Kremlin, enclosing not only the governor’s residence, a pleasant garden, and the barracks of a considerable garrison, but also the principal church, the emerald green cupolas of which show in pleasant contrast to the unvarying

white of the walls. Along the ridge and from the banks of the Volga up the slope is placed the town of Nijni. We rattle along the street, past the stalls where men and women are selling huge water-melons, cut in radiating slices at something less than a farthing for a pound weight of the fruit which looks delicious in the rapidly increasing heat of the day; past tawdry shrines of St. Nicholas and St. Isaac, before which long-haired and heavily-booted peasants are bowing their bare heads nearly to their knees; past a church built very much after the style of that of St. Basil in Moscow; mounting always and at last through a deep grassy cutting, which has the Kremlin on one side and on the other a group of prettily-coloured villas, the palest blue or green, soft red and primrose yellow, all with bright green roofs of wood or metal, to the high table land, where we are first in the great "place" of Nijni, and then in a wide street in which is Lopachef's Hotel.

There is a terrible smell of stale tobacco inside Lopachef's closed door, but we have only to choose between Lopachef and Soboref, and the latter is Russian vapour bath as well as hotel. We are, without doubt, in the best hotel in Nijni, though there are no carpets on any of the floors, no sheets on the beds, and nothing but the invariable *hors d'œuvres* of a Russian dinner—arrack, uncooked sardines, caviare, and radishes, to relieve our immediate hunger.

There is, of course, a picture of a saint, all but the head covered with tinselled robes, in one corner of the dining-room ; a lamp burns beneath it, the light hardly discernible in the brightness of approaching noon. Soup and cutlets, with something more drinkable than the alcohol of Russia, are however soon before us, and in an hour or two we are strolling to the front of the high ground to enjoy the famous prospect—a view so extensive as to be limited only by the clearness of the air and of one's eyesight. From left all round to right, the foreground appears flat, the windings of the Volga and the Oka can be traced, like those of ribbon on a vast table, flowing through miles of sandy plain, varied with patches of pine forest, and smaller areas in which cultivation has reclaimed the soil ; the steamboats move like elongated dots ; we can trace the ground plan of the Fair, which is more than a mile distant, and see its myriad life moving to and fro like that of ant-hills. An unceasing stream of carts and droschkies pours, during the months of the Fair, across the bridge of boats. The scene is one to be remembered in company with that from the Kremlin of Moscow.

The usual quiet of this part of Nijni is broken, as we return to the hotel, by the tramp of armed men. They were guarding a long procession of prisoners, who were making forced marches to Siberia. The soldiers slouched along, looking hardly less miserable,

dusty, and travel-stained than the wretched people whom they watched with fixed bayonets and drawn swords. The prisoners marched, some four and others six abreast, between the files of soldiers. Some were chained in couples, others tramped alone, and all were apparently of the lower classes. There were three or four hundred convicts as nearly as I could count. Very little talk was passing among them, and the soldiers, with sword or bayonet, rudely kept off any one who approached within their reach. All traffic was suspended while the long line passed. The prisoners were followed by twenty-seven wagons loaded with the poor baggage of their families, upon which the women and children were uneasily mounted, among whom lay a few elderly or sick men. These women were the wives who were willing to accompany their condemned husbands, and to settle in Siberia at least for the term of their husbands' sentence, which in no case is less than four years. If the wives choose to go they must take their children, and all submit to the degradation and rigours of surveillance and imprisonment. The pavements of Nijni are the worst imaginable, and as these springless vehicles (which were not really wagons, but simply four fir poles fastened at obtuse angles on wheels) jolted over the uneven boulders, the poor children were shaken high out of their wretched seat at nearly every yard of the journey. Soldiers with drawn swords walked

beside these cartloads of weakness and childhood. It was very touching to see the old men and the sick, painfully lift themselves whenever they passed a church, and with the sadness of eternal farewell, uncover their miserable heads and cross their breasts devoutly as they were borne along in their terrible journey to Siberia. For another month or six weeks these wretched people, or such of them as survived, would be travelling to their dreaded settlement, which, however, I believe, is somewhat better than the Siberia with which our novelists and playwrights have made us familiar.

A pleasanter sight was that of the great Fair. Now is the time for the last bargains in the greatest Fair in the world—an international exposition half a dozen times as large as that which in 1851 set us all thinking the millennium had arrived when Prince Albert's ideas and Paxton's plans were realised in Hyde Park. What shall we buy? There is a sharp-eyed tea-merchant watching our movements, hoping to get rid of yet one or two more of those square seventy-pound bundles of tea piled at the door of his store. The tea is in a light chest, which has been cased before it left China in a damp bullock's hide, the stitching of which has been strained and hardened in the long caravan journey over Central Asian deserts. Thinking that we may perhaps purchase, he makes a sign of encouragement, and forthwith rams an iron bodkin,

three feet long, and shaped like a cheese-scoop, but with a solid, pointed end, into the tea, twists it, and produces a fragrant sample. He is one of hundreds of tea merchants who have hired a stall in the Fair ; and in compliment to the commodity, the roofs in this part are built pagoda-fashion, but, like all the rest, the tea-stores are sheds of timber and brick, placed together in long parallel lines, sheltered from sun and rain by a rough arcade, upon the brick pavement of which purchasers and idlers pass along.

More attractive, perhaps, than the tea-dealer, is the Persian opposite, whose dark eyes gleam with desire to sell anything in his store. He has carpets of soft colours, such as the sons of Iran best know how to blend, carpets heavy as himself to cover large rooms ; small carpets; mere handfuls, on which the faithful may kneel in orthodox Mahomedan fashion five times a day, fixing their eyes in the direction of Mecca. He has books ; here is a copy of the Koran, bound in Tabriz, marble-backed, with yellow-edged leaves, like some of our older editions, a book which for two roubles any one, no matter whether his faith is centred at Mecca or Jerusalem, anywhere or nowhere, may put in his pocket. This bright-eyed merchant might be shown in London for the Shah, whom he much resembles ; and if, in his high-standing cap of black lamb-skin, his grass-green tunic, and his scarlet-lined overcoat, he were to appear at Charing Cross surrounded

by two or three of his own travelling trunks, which are also for sale, by way of luggage, he would be sure, as a travelling “sensation,” to achieve legitimate success. He presses with a gay smile upon our attention one of the chests, which is painted bright vermilion, cross-barred, like Malvolio’s legs, with bands of black; but he has another of green and black, and a third of yellow with blue bands of iron; and if one had the boldness requisite for travelling in such illustrious company, these trunks would certainly obviate all difficulty as to recognising one’s luggage in the customary and truly British scramble at any London terminus.

We see at a glance that any one who wishes to have a true idea of Nijni must get rid at once and for ever of any notion of an English fair, by way of comparison. On the Volga they mean business, not pleasure; and the Fair is held in buildings infinitely ruder and simpler in construction, but quite as permanent as those of the Lowther Arcade. For about half the year these are closed, and the straight lines of the parallel streets of the Fair are only tenanted by sparrows, picking up the last traces of the great gathering. The site is flat, but in Fair-time the roads between the long rows of sheds are worn into rivulets of filth, or into heaps and hollows of dust. Not one man in five wears a leather shoe; the rest, those who do not go barefoot, are for the most part content

with sandals made of dried grass, bound over thick woollen stockings with wisps of the same vegetable.

There is a great deal of genuine barter going on. In one sense, indeed, it may be truly said that no one at this gathering has "ready" money. Here are two Persian boys bargaining for a ring which has surely come from one of the *fabriques d'imitation* of Paris. The process is long. Twenty copecks perhaps divide seller and buyer, and it may be that part of this difference will disappear in talk to-day and the remainder to-morrow or the day after. Three Tartars, dressed in ragged sheep-skins, have their slanting eyes, that unmistakeable mark of race, fixed upon the gay glories of a cotton handkerchief, which I hope is Manchester, but fear is Moscow work. And so it goes on all through the busy town, or commercial camp, which is called the Fair of Nijni Novgorod. Not rarely does a bargain take three days in the making. What Adam Smith calls the "higgling of the market" is a tremendous business at the Russian mart. "Small profits and quick returns" is not the Nijni motto. Prices are all "fancy." It is not easy to get at the relation of supply and demand. The dealer asks twice or three times the legitimate value, and then engages in a wordy duel with the purchaser, in which bystanders are quite at liberty to "jine in," as a Yankee would say.

Out from his perpetual throne upon the bergs and

mid the fogs of the North, the Ice King will come in a few weeks, sealing, as he passes, the land and the rivers of Russia ; and consequently no small portion of the work of the Fair is directed towards providing for his reception. Thick woollen and leather gloves are largely bought by the hairiest peasantry in Europe, men whose long back-hair and beards run into and seem intermixed with the wool of the dirty sheep-skins which cover them from head to foot. All these gloves have that well-known peculiarity of shape, common also to the gloves of English infancy, which Charles Dickens so happily described as made up with a parlour for the thumb and a common tap-room for the fingers. Of course there are furs—piles upon piles of fur—but this article of dress or ornament is not cheap at Nijni, and the kinds of fur most worn in England are not to be seen. There is no sealskin, and but little sable or ermine. Black fox and silver fox, wolf and bear-skin, and commoner furs for lining, are much sold. Desperately anxious upon these last September days of the Fair, which opens in May, are the dealers to sell their remaining stock of cloth coats lined with fur—the *shuba*—so much worn in Russia. The prices rise from 8*l.* to 100*l.*, according to the sort of fur.

A Russian will be warm at any sacrifice of elegance in his person or of ventilation in his home ; but he has another requirement not less imperative—he must

have in his ill-ventilated house a tinselled picture of the head of Christ, or of some saint; if a saint, then it is generally the one after whom he is named. There is not a baptismal name in common use throughout Russia which is not that of a saint—which has not a saint to father it; and so it happens that when all the Alexanders or Alexises in a village celebrate, with all the arrack they can get, the return of their name-day, a sort of brotherhood often becomes established between people who have received the same name at the ecclesiastical font. A roughly-built country cart has just passed carrying off a purchase, a large head of Christ, the conventional face looking out from a setting of tawdry ormolu, the whole framed in vulgar, gaudy gilt. Two men are holding the frame to keep it from contact with the sides of the cart, which rumbles and tumbles along the uneven way; and as it goes, peasants and dealers uncover their heads and make most reverently the sign of the cross upon their bodies before this article of merchandise.

It is ten o'clock, and here are two men swinging back the iron doors of their shed to begin business for the day. They are Russian tea-dealers. With feet placed close together, with cap in hand, they bow in deep obeisance three times towards the nearest church, crossing themselves as they bend before they unfasten the padlocks; and then, on gaining the floor of their shops, they repeat the religious bowing, which in the

Greek Church never takes the form of genuflexion, the knees, in fact, being almost the only joint that is not bent.

Last summer we met with a cottier farmer in Ireland who had given 200*l.* towards the building fund of a Roman Catholic chapel, which was being erected in the parish wherein he lived. The sum was immense for a man in his position, and people were naturally inquisitive on the subject. To one who asked why he had subscribed so largely, he said, "I want to have a claim on the Almighty;" and I am sure I do these Russians no wrong in believing that these ostentatious shop prayers of theirs are in part a demonstration, and in part concerned with averting the influence of the devil of the Greek Church from their till.

The "religious difficulty" is nicely settled at Nijni. In the interest of Russian trade, the Crescent is lifted to the skies high as the Cross. Raised somewhat upon an artificial mound, near the centre of the Fair, is a mosque, probably the most northern mosque in Europe. In the small courtyard, a stalwart moollah was making signs of direction to a Tartar dwarf—a hunchback, and in rags; a deaf mute, whose glittering eyes fixed greedily upon us as we advanced to visit the mosque. Perhaps the moollah in charge had not done well at the Fair; he looked sad as we walked with him over the floor of his church, which

was covered with clean matting, on which a few of the commonest sort of Persian carpets were laid. Probably he was sad at the thought that the glories and the work of the great Fair were nearly over.

One finds no trace whatever, on entering a mosque, of the anti-human principles which are taught there from the words of the Koran. In the air of a mosque there is no taint of vengeance, of slavery, of polygamy, of deadly animosity towards dissent. One contrasts rather the purity and simplicity of the place of worship, the grateful absence of any stupid attempt to personify the Infinite in mortal forms, with the degrading and meretricious attractions of a Greek or Roman church, with the trumpery, vulgar images of saints and virgins, images of persons, some not only without real claim to reverence, but rather deserving, as repressors of civilisation, the forgetfulness, if not the contempt, of mankind ; objects of conventional regard, which not one worshipper in ten thousand could explain or account for by any well-informed statement of the saint's claim. The mosque of Nijni was, like all mosques throughout the world, a temple without trace of sect. We passed from it into the adjacent church for the people of the Fair who are of the Orthodox Russian faith ; and there a priest in sumptuous raiment was bringing bass notes apparently from somewhere about the region of his stomach, after the most admired manner of priests of that com-

munition, and, as he paused to take breath, kissing pictures on the screen, glueing his worship and praise with his lips to the framework of these daubs, and to the sham jewels in the cover of the copy of the Gospels, which lay before him. Over the way stood an Armenian church, a nearer approximation to Rome. No limitation to pictures with flat robes of gold or silver in that place of worship! There they may go the whole animal, so far as images are concerned.

Not distant from the churches is the principal theatre of the Fair, a wooden building, in which, at the time of our visit, one might see—so the bills said—"the unapproachable Hickin Family." These were the only words in English (and perhaps Mr. Hickin would tell us these words are "American") which we observed within the Fair. There was, however, one unquestionable exception. The heap of "Three Cord Knitting" on a stall near the Governor's house must surely have been of English manufacture.

If I remember rightly, Mr. Cobden made a tour in Russia, and then formed no very high opinion of the solidarity or strength of the Empire, especially for external warfare. I never heard that he visited Nijni, and I hardly think it possible that he could have been there in the Fair-time, without leaving such a record of his visit as it would not have been easy to forget. Had he been there, his patriotic soul would surely have poured over with contempt for the

commercial policy of Russia, and with longing for the universal reign of free trade. We passed scores of stalls covered with hardware of all sorts—knives, padlocks, door-locks, tools, nails, household cutlery and utensils—all of miserably inferior manufacture, the blades and fastenings bearing the mark of Warsaw, but most often of Moscow, or some other Russian town. Tens of thousands of these useful articles had passed within the four preceding months, and were passing daily during our visit, from Nijni into Asia. What a trade might Mr. Bright's constituents do in this way if it were not for the prohibitory rates of the Russian tariff; and how soon would Russians, of Europe and of Asia, learn to appreciate the difference between a Sheffield or Birmingham blade, and the home-made knives of coarse iron, which are forced upon them at a price for which they could obtain English manufacture, from a mistaken belief that this provision of inferior articles to the many for the benefit of the few, is advantageous to the general welfare of the Russian Empire. Of the vast quantity of cotton goods in the Fair, some look like Manchester pieces, but much is certainly the inferior work of Russian hands. There is no mistaking the “*Nouveautés de Paris*,” which are to be met with on all sides ; buttons, especially ornamental buttons, gaily ribboned slippers, pictures of women, beautiful in face and very much *décolletées* as to dress, figures in lewd attitudes, some

representing the performance of the *can-can*—very saleable in Persia—parcels of scent, toys of all kinds, and musical instruments. The large and open demand for Parisian pictures of the lascivious sort in Mahomedan countries is worth volumes of printed commentary upon the teaching of the Koran. These pictures, which a garçon of the Quartier Latin would think it bold and roué-like to display upon the walls of his garret, are, in Persia and in Turkey, paraded in the family apartments, and treasured in photographic albums in recesses which answer to the drawing-room tables of Western Europe; nor is it common for any father of a family to hesitate in illustrating conversation carried on in presence of his sons, by indecent reference to these erotic productions, which are usually the work of Frenchmen, unless the taste of the khan or effendi leans to the less-veiled and coarser indelicacy of German work. But this is premature; we are not yet in Persian houses. In the Nijni Fair, Parisian spoons seem to tickle most successfully Asiatic fancy, while prosaic and solid-working Germany contributes stockings and *strümpfände*, less elegant than the *jarretières de Paris*.

Floating through the Fair are the sellers of watermelons, shouting “*arbus*,” “*a-r-r-r-r bū-ū-s*,” at the top of their voices. But they are silent often when the glistening red inside of the huge fruit attracts thirsty

buyers of slices at one copeck each. Others, armed with scale and weights, vend luscious grapes just arrived by steamboat from the shores of the Caspian. One cannot go far without meeting a man loaded with furry caps, much worn in Russia. About the centre of the Fair is the Governor's "palace," in which the Duke of Edinburgh lately stayed. It has an unusual, and, I believe for a palace, unique feature, in the emblazonment of "Café-Restaurant" upon the wall of the ground floor. This is in Russian letters, of course, and it tempts one to enter. Being a Russian café, it is without ventilation, and the fumes of smoke—to say nothing of the mingled smell of soup, of oily fish, of tea and of greasy people in heavy costumes bearing the dirt of years—prevent any immediate certainty as to whether it is the Governor in person, or a young lady of Nijni, to whom so many guests on leaving are paying their addresses and their copecks. It is a young lady; and there is no connexion between the café and the apartments of the first floor, which lately sheltered the illustrious son-in-law of the Tsar.

The lively aspect of the Fair spreads upwards to the roofs, which, as one sees from the top of this building, are all painted red or green. One sees too the "life" of the Fair, not only coursing over all the land between the two rivers, but extending to the barges, the steam-boats and the shallow-bottomed vessels of every shape which are moored upon the sandy shores.

Nijni is, as I have said, very picturesque and very dirty. One way of making a picturesque town is to take a site somewhat irregular and rocky, and to plant houses washed with different colours, including blue, yellow, and salmon colour, in gardens ; cover these habitations with roofs painted red or green, let the intervals be filled in with trees and shrubs, most of them old and large, the leaves showing varied tints of autumn. Raise here and there a green or gilded cupola of some Byzantine church ; secure over all a blue sky, made bright with the genial warmth of the shining sun. The result will be pleasing, and will much resemble Nijni, as it appears towards the end of September.





CHAPTER V.

Leaving Nijni—The *Tsarevna Marie*—Tickets for 2000 miles—Our fellow passengers—The *Alexander II.*—Kazan—Mahomedans in Russia—Our Lady of Kazan—"No sheets!"—Oriental cleanliness—Russian climate and clothing—Orientalism in Russia—Persian prayers—A Shi'ah's devotions—Shallowness of the Volga—The River Kama—Hills about Simbirsk—Samara—Mares' milk cure—Volsk—Saratof—Tartar population—Prisoners for the Caucasus—Tsaritzin—Sarepta—Gingerbread and mustard—Chorney Yar—A peasant mayor—Tartar fishermen—Astrakhan—Mouths of the Volga—Raising level of the Caspian.

IT was not at all an easy matter in Nijni, a town of forty-five thousand inhabitants, to find a person who could speak even a few words of any language other than Russian, or the Arabic *patois* of the Russian Tartars. But the captain of the *Tsarevna Marie*, a rather high and mighty man, in fur coat and fur-lined boots, could talk German, and with his assistance we obtained for one hundred and twenty-six roubles, two tickets entitling us to a separate cabin from Nijni down the Volga to Astrakhan—a river journey of about fourteen hundred miles, and from Astrakhan, again south, for the whole length—more than six hundred miles—of the Caspian Sea to the Persian landing-place of Enzelli. The steamboats of

this part of the world, in waters which have neither ingress nor exit for shipping, are the pride of all the mooring places, though they are not of native manufacture. They are built in other countries by foreigners, and brought in pieces to the banks of the Volga. It has always been so in Russia. The first vessel of war ever built in Russia was put together this way at Nijni, by a company of merchants from Holstein, who in the seventeenth century obtained permission to force a trade with Persia and India by way of the Volga and the Caspian.

From the considerable town of Twer to its largest mouth in the Caspian Sea, the Volga carries steam-boats for about eighteen hundred miles, into such a change of climate that one sees passengers who are wrapped, chrysalis-like, in furs and rugs at Nijni, transformed into a butterfly lightness and gaiety of costume at Astrakhan. We left Nijni at the time of year when the boats are most crowded, and the deck saloon of the *Tsarevna Marie* was not exactly delightful. Though female as well as male passengers were at liberty to smoke in every part of the vessel, and certainly did not neglect the privilege, there was a prejudice against open windows, which one finds nowhere so strong as among the stove-grown people of Russia. Literally the Russian women of the richer classes are reared in hothouses, and have the characteristics of fruit so produced. They have less vitality

than women of other countries, and their beauty—exquisite as it sometimes shows itself—fades more quickly. We struggle, and at last resign ourselves to the disagreeable accompaniments of the journey.

We travel with the stream. We are all returning from the Fair of Nijni—a heavy boatload. Our fellow-passengers are Russians from the least civilised parts of the European Empire, Persians from Resht and Tehran, Armenians and Georgians from the Caucasus, Tartars from the lower Volga. We are the only English on board. Our neighbours' clothes are of many colours and shapes, and this many-coloured variety is the striking feature of their luggage. The Christians of the superior class eat royal sturgeon in cutlets, and delicate sterlet mostly in soup; while the more picturesque Mahomedans on the deck are content with unleavened bread and grapes or watermelons. All of us, without distinction of creed or country, drink tea; the engine boiler has a tap on deck from which the Mahomedan kettles and those of the poorer Christians are supplied with hot water. In the saloon we take tea *à la Russe*—in glasses, and amazingly weak. I venture to abuse the Russian mode of taking warm water with the faintest colouring of tea, which at once brings down the national wrath of a passenger, who declares that the English “boil” their tea, and will have it no other way but “cooked” like broth or soup.

When it was wet and cold on the way from Nijni Novgorod to Kazan, the poorer Christians on board the *Tsarevna Marie* drank corn-brandy largely, while the Mahomedans hid themselves beneath their carpets and muttered hopes of reaching a better land. At Kazan, we were transferred to the *Alexander II.*, a very large vessel, her white hull towering five and twenty feet above the water. She is built upon the plan of those Hudson River and Mississippi steamboats which have so long made river travelling in America most comfortable. She has two floors or storeys above the water, into which she presses no where to a greater depth than four feet, and the first and second-class saloons and sleeping cabins, with their surrounding galleries, are entirely shut off from the under storey or main deck, where are the third-class passengers, and where the cargo is received and the crew are busy in making the vessel fast at the numerous stations on the river. In September, no vessel drawing four feet of water can get up the river to Nijni, and for our parts, we were by no means sorry to quit the narrower limits of the *Tsarevna Marie* for the splendid saloon and ample space of the *Alexander II.*, which, after assuring us that she is "the first ship on the river," the captain said was built in Belgium, sent in pieces to Russia, and put together on the banks of the Volga. There is time to drive to Kazan, of which, though it is three miles distant, we might see some-

thing from the river if the banks were not so high as to render this impossible. The first sight of Kazan, a town of 80,000 inhabitants, impresses one with a sense of the error of supposing that Russia in Europe is exclusively inhabited by Christians. We had, in 1868, seen mosques at Eupatoria and Tartars in other parts of the Crimea, but we hardly expected to find so large a proportion of the population of one of the principal towns in Central Russia so largely composed of Mahomedans, of whom there are not less than 20,000 in Kazan. There is a tower in Kazan which some assert is a relic of times when the Tartars held their own in this region. But Kazan has been "reduced to ashes," as the historians say, more than once, and there is so much that is Tartaresque in Russian buildings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, that this may as well be a monument of the conqueror Ivan the Terrible as of any Tartar Tsar. There is "Our Lady of Kazan"—she is Russian every bit of her. She is "miraculous," and a church has been built on purpose to receive her. Her "miracle" consisted in escaping destruction when the building in which she was suspended was consumed by fire. Doubtless she was removed by some priest and placed in a miraculous position after the fire, or she may easily have been preserved by the accidents of the conflagration. It is probably true that many "miracles" of this sort happened in the

Pantechnicon, to articles of furniture stored there before the fire. From a picture, she was transformed into a revenue by the miracle. Catherine II. placed diamonds of enormous value above her head, and Orthodox Russians, who bow down before her, feel entitled to look with contempt upon their heathen fellow townsmen, the Tartar Mussulmans.

"No sheets!" I hear the one English lady exclaim, as we are leaving the moorings at Kazan ; and it does strike one as odd and uncomfortable, to see nothing but a bare couch provided for a five days' voyage—not a single article of bedding. *Prostenia*—*i.e.*, bed-linen—is perhaps the Russian word which English travellers pronounce with most energy. Muscovite civilisation has not yet attained to sheets ; indeed Russians are generally prepared to maintain that theirs is the better mode of sleeping. The Russians have in this, as in many other matters, the Oriental rather than the Occidental fashion. In Western Europe it is the cleanly, wholesome custom to lay aside entirely the garments of the day. In Eastern Europe and in Asia the opposite plan prevails ; and, for the most part, people sleep in some, if not all, the clothes in which they have tilled the land or walked the street. In the house of a Persian, a man's bed is anywhere upon the carpets in any one of the rooms. There are always pillows lying about, on which to rest the arm or back by day and the head by night. He takes

his sleep by night as an Englishman does his nap after dinner, except that the Englishman is generally raised from the floor and the Persian is not. Britons will humble themselves metaphorically to the dust, in asking a friend to "give them a bed;" in Oriental lands, neither host nor guest would understand such a phrase, for every traveller, whether he is visitor or voyager, carries all that he requires for sleeping, except shelter from inclement weather, and a man's hospitality is not limited, as with us, to the confines of his "spare bed," nor is there any of that sense of indelicacy in sleeping in company with others which is the natural consequence of the bedroom arrangements of Western Europe. When people make their bed anywhere, and are in the habit of carrying all that they deem requisite in this way from place to place, they dispense with articles which would require frequent washing. It is otherwise when the bed becomes a fixed institution as in England, and there can be no doubt that the more cleanly practice is that which brings as much as possible of the bedding most frequently to the wash-tub, and with regard to the person, that which suggests by most complete removal of garments of every day life the most complete and thorough ablutions. It is quite a mistake to suppose that Oriental peoples are the most cleanly because they observe the washings directed by the Koran. These are certainly performed, and not

without good effect; but this is done in the perfunctory manner in which religious obligations are generally undertaken, and it is done while wearing clothes which may not have been removed for weeks. The face is smeared with water before prayer and before eating, but there is no washing such as will remove the dust from eyes already menaced, as a consequence, with chronic ophthalmia; and if it were not the custom among Mahomedans to shave their heads, their matted hair would become a preserve for noxious vermin.

The worst of the Russian is that he has carried some of these customs rather too far North. He does not shave his head nor clean it. His food of oily fish, or the most greasy preparation of meat, the demand of a cold climate, is not so cleanly as the rice saturated with meat gravy and the fruit of the Oriental. At six months after date the clothes of the Russian are not so tolerable as those of the Oriental of the South. The climate being so much colder, the Russian sleeps in a less pure atmosphere, and indeed the air of Russian bedrooms, even of the higher class, is, in winter, often disgusting. Russians, whom English people meet in Italy during winter, are often heard to say that they have never experienced the miseries of cold until they came south of the Alps. On board the *Alexander II.*, though there were yet more than three months remaining of the year, and

though the weather was by no means what English people would call cold, the cabins were heated with hot-water pipes. Two Russian gentlemen complained of loss of appetite, from headache, and of sleeplessness. They were astonished when we asked how they could expect any other result after lying for hours in a small cabin with the door and window closed, and with their pillows all but resting upon a huge pipe filled with boiling water. To their surprise they were cured next day by changing their pillows to the opposite ends of their beds, and by leaving two inches of their window open. The day on which we left Kazan was such as in England would have been called, and enjoyed as, "a mild autumn day," but being in Russia the cabins were warmed to a stewy heat, and we noticed through the day that our cabin was the only one of which the window was open.

It would be possible to enumerate, almost to weariness, the points in which Russians, differing from the people of Western Europe, resemble those races whom we call Orientals. Except Turkey, Russia is the only European country in which women smoke tobacco habitually. Turkish women are as a rule delicate, owing to their customary seclusion in houses (some do not pass the threshold for months, or even years), and to the substitution of narcotics and sweet-meats for wholesome and nutritious food. Russian women are often not less feeble, owing to similar

habits, and to the unnatural, enervating temperature of their houses. We have seen at Moscow and elsewhere how, after the manner of the mosque, Russians make the place of honour for interment in the corners of their churches. In the Cathedral of the Assumption, the resting-place of the most revered dead, the tombs of SS. Theognostus, Peter, Philip, and Jonah, all Metropolitans of Moscow, are enshrined in the four angles of that wonderful church ; and there also are the remains of SS. Photius and Cyprian, of Philaret and Hermogenes, Patriarchs of the Russo-Greek Church. Some confusion of manners and customs is perhaps inevitable in an Empire which extends through thirty degrees of latitude, and includes Finns and Persians, Germans and Calmuck Tartars, with people of many colours and creeds—the fair-haired girls of Hango and Helsingfors and the ebonyised descendants of Tartar slaves ; followers of Luther and worshippers of Bhudda.

As the setting sun and the flat horizon draw together in the reddening light of evening, representatives of millions of the Tsar's subjects mount the highest places in our vessel, and turn their prayerful eyes towards Mecca. But whether the view was clouded with pitiless rain in our journey from Nijni to Kazan, or brilliant at Kazan and onwards to Astrakhan, never did some of the Persian and Tartar traders omit, about the hours of sunrise and sunset,

to stand with uncovered feet and make their prayers and obeisance towards the East. How could man, we thought at the time, be more picturesque than one of these merchants of Russian Persia, to whose naturally great stature was added a conical fur hat, high as the bearskin of an English Guardsman ! Pressing this high crown of curling black lambskin tightly on his brow against the wind, he stripped off his outer robe, lined with the yellow fur of the marmot, which he spread as a prayer-carpet upon the high deck. Observed yet seeming utterly unconscious and unnoticed by all around, he laid aside his boots, and stepped in his stockings upon his coat of fur. Then drawing his bright green tunic more tightly within his silver-mounted waistbelt, he placed both hands upon his loose trousers of black satin, and gazed in rapt attention upon the eastern sky. Soon he fell upon his knees, and pressed his forehead several times upon the deck. He rose, and with new motions, designed to clear his thoughts from things of earth, and to make him receptive of ideas of Allah the all-merciful, he continued and concluded his devotions. We know that there is hypocrisy among men of every creed, and in Mahommedanism, as in others, a frequent seeming unto men to pray ; we know how much higher and nobler in morality and justice, as in every other valuable attribute, is true Christianity, but there can equally be no doubt in our minds that the outward aspect of

this Mahomedan prayer is far nobler than the ceremonies of the Greek Church, than the religious exercises of Russians, with their farthing tapers, their bowings, their kissing of books and of tinselled pictures.

No river of Europe so much resembles the Nile as the Volga, and especially in its southern course the sandy likeness is very remarkable. For hundreds of miles the country upon the Volga is low and uninteresting. Like the Danube, and like the Nile also, the right bank is the more elevated, and as upon the African river, the stream is occasionally crossed by sandy shallows, and the crew are summoned to sounding by the ringing of the captain's bell. Upon a river of such majestic breadth, one is at first amazed at the figures which are called out by the man who, from the head of the vessel, sounds the depth with a pole, coloured alternately black and white, in lengths rather less than a foot; "eight," "six," and sometimes "five," he calls. It is demonstrated that the *Alexander II.*, with excellent accommodation for thirty first-class, as many second-class, and any number of third-class passengers, to say nothing of cargo, draws no more than four feet of water. Her furnaces are fed with the fuel of the country, cleft logs of pine, each about two feet in length; and twice or three times in every day a fresh supply of wood is taken in, which is invariably carried on board from the shore by women.

Half a day's journey after leaving Kazan, we arrive at the point where the bluish Volga receives the yellowish waters of the Kama, the highway into Siberia. We pass on towards Simbirsk, at which we touch in the hours of night. The lights of the town look down upon us from a height of five hundred feet, and the right bank of the river rises still higher as we proceed the next day towards Samara. Just as upon the Rhine, one is told to reserve admiration for the famous view of the Sieben Gebirge, and upon the less picturesque Danube for the scenery of the Iron Gates; so upon the Volga, it is between Simbirsk and Samara that lovers of the beautiful are supposed to reach the acme of delight. The brief beauties of the Volga could be seen to no greater advantage than when we passed them in the last days of September, and the green firs set in the golden colouring of autumn-tinted birch leaves are very refreshing and attractive for the short distance in which there is anything approaching the picturesque in the scenery upon the Volga.

Near Samara, where the right bank, like the unvarying left, is once more flat, we observed the commencement of an important public work of a character most truly Russian—a work to which, I should hope, the poll-tax, rather than British investors in Russian railways, will contribute in every stone and girder. In this century the undertaking

will never "pay," from the investor's point of view. We saw the beginning of a viaduct across the Volga, a viaduct which will be the longest in the world, forming a connexion by railway between St. Petersburg and Orenburg. The procureur-général of the latter town was standing beside us as we approached the preparatory works. He and his townsmen rejoice greatly at the proposed expenditure of a million sterling, apparently for the benefit of Orenburg, as it is not in contemplation to push the railway further to the east. But they all understand very well that this is the high road to Khiva, and that the Government, by constructing this viaduct and railway, will vastly increase the security of their hold upon Central Asia, and the facilities for extending conquest in that direction.

At Samara we have passed 840 versts from Nijni. In all these towns of the Volga there is a large Mahomedan population ; but the most curious circumstance about Samara is in the mares' milk cure, which is carried on in several of the best houses near the river side, these establishments being superintended by medical men, just as hydropathic cures are in England. At Samara mares' milk is made into an effervescent and fermented drink, by the admixture of an acid, and the result, not very unlike one variety of cheap champagne, in flavour as well as in appearance, is taken as a cure for diseases of the lungs and

kidneys. At Volsk we are nearly 750 miles from Nijni. We landed at this "large, handsome town," as Murray's Handbook for Russia calls it, upon a sand-heap littered with refuse of all kinds. There were several carriages waiting for hire, but these were nothing better than dirty baskets, originally of great strength, containing a handful of dried roots and grass, of the roughest sort, for the "fare" to sit upon. One or two had a seat covered with leather, but it needed the education of a lifetime to keep oneself on this perch when the vehicle moved over the deep and filthy ruts of the main streets. The streets of Volsk are straight and wide; the houses are, with very rare exceptions, built like a log hut, of fir poles, tenoned and morticed together, just in the same style as the houses in a Norwegian village.

The Mayor of Volsk and his wife, who came on board as passengers to Saratof, were full to overflowing with happy anticipation of the gaieties of the latter town, where, they told us, an Italian Opera company were giving a series of performances, some of which they hoped to witness. I asked his worship how the Tartars, of whom there are a great number in Volsk, agreed with the Russians. He said that difficulties constantly arose, and that recently Tartars had complained to him, alleging that Russians would not let them use the public wells. When we arrived at Saratof, we were almost inclined to laugh at the

notion of Italian Opera in such a place, where the rickety wooden sheds of the Tartar bazaar occupy the neighbourhood of the Opera House. Probably one-third of the ninety thousand inhabitants of Saratof are Mahomedans, and live in kennels in the outskirts, or in their wooden shops. Some of these people, with a store in the bazaar which is perhaps ten feet square, have a bundle of dried grass in a corner, which they cover with a carpet. This serves them for bed, and the place is at once home and shop. But the streets, like those of other Russian towns on the Volga, though their surface is the public sewer, and is without any attempt at paving, are generally straight and wide, and a house which would be thought good in a second-rate German town stands side by side with a wooden hovel neither water-tight nor wind proof.

The Tartars in these towns have probably a hard time, and suffer much oppression. Their religion is tolerated, and though they rarely have mosques in the shape of buildings designed and erected for the exercise of their religion, they have houses which, though with none of the outward appearances of a mosque, are set apart for their religious ceremonies. All this region, where they now take the lowest place, was once their own. They have schools, but only those attached to their mosques, and there nothing beyond the poor art of reading a few sentences from the Koran is taught.

Many of them steal away into the Turkish Empire, in order to avoid the operation of the new military law, which has put thousands of these Mahomedans of Europe into the uniforms of the Russian army.

On the Volga, about Saratof, in autumn, one sees boats loaded with melons, the fruit stacked high upon the decks, just as the old-fashioned sixty-pound cannon balls were piled in former days at Woolwich. Third-class passengers rush on shore at every station, buy a melon as big as one's head for copecks of the value of threepence, a large loaf of brown bread for as much more, and there is provision for a man for a whole day. At Nijni we had seen a procession of prisoners on the way to Siberia; at Saratof we saw a number of men, women, and children, in similar circumstances, on the way to the Caucasus. They were marched on board a passenger steam vessel, in build resembling the *Alexander II.*, between two files of soldiers, and secured in two large cages placed near the paddle-boxes. The front of each cage overlooking the water, and the sides, which faced the stern of the steamboat, were barred with iron, so that every part of the interior could be seen, just as in the lion-houses of the Zoological Gardens, with this difference, that in the case of these prisoners there was no overhanging roof to prevent rain or sunshine from pouring in upon their wretchedness. At the back of each cage there was a lair common to all, without distinction of sex or

age. When all were secured, including the guiltless wives and children, fights occurred for places least exposed to the cold wind. The Tartar prisoners were alone. No wives had elected to go with their Tartar husbands into the snows of the Caucasus. The greater criminals wore heavy chains, linked to their ankles and wrists, the loud clanking of which, as they walked to and fro in the cage, seemed to be enjoyed as a sort of distinction in the miserable crowd. There were three soldiers in undress uniform, one of them wearing chains of this sort. But the saddest sight was the exposure of the innocent children in a criminal cage, and the inevitable injury to them of being thus associated with criminals, and exhibited for days to the population of the Volga, in a company where there could be no doubt that he appeared the greatest hero whose chains clanked heaviest.

Saratof is the largest town upon the Volga, and its site is so hilly that from one point of view nearly the whole of its buildings may be seen. It has an immense trade in fish and agricultural productions. The description of Saratof as "handsome," in Murray's Handbook, is ridiculous and misleading. It has a few official buildings which would pass muster in a second-rate German town, and it has the prime element in the formation of a handsome town —that of liberal space in the plan of its roads and streets. Compared with a purely Tartar village it

may seem handsome, but Saratof is to a great extent itself Tartar. So is Tsaritzin, the next railway station upon the Volga. Tsaritzin is usually the place of debarkation for travellers from Persia and the Caspian, who are bound for Western Europe. With the next place, at which the *Alexander II.* stops, we are disappointed. We had hoped to find the little town of Sarepta upon the water side. It is known throughout Russia as an exclusive colony of the German “Herrnhütter”—the Moravian Brethren; and spoken of as a model of social welfare and successful industry. Instead of the town there was only a wooden stall in sight. This was painted green, and stood at some little distance from the landing-place on the sandy bank of the river. The captain declared he did not intend to wait more than two or three minutes, but it was clear that whatever happened, half a hundred at least of the passengers were resolved to reach that wooden stall. Behind the little counter which was spread with gingerbread cakes and neatly-fastened packets bearing the word “Sarepta” in large letters, stood a tall, solemn-looking German who, if he had been born with ten arms in place of two, could not have delivered gingerbread fast enough to satisfy the eager and hurried passengers. Seeing that the cakes looked good, several people bought the mysterious packets, of whom one at least was ignorant, as we were, that these

contained not cakes, but condiment—the mustard of Sarepta, for the manufacture of which the German colony is famous. The Sarepta community have a shop in St. Petersburgh for the sale of their mustard and gingerbread.

The Volga widens to a noble stream. Gazing on its broad and resplendent surface at any point between Kazan and Astrakhan, one would hardly suspect its real weakness—its shallowness. At Chorney Yar we were more than sixteen hundred miles from Twer, and yet our four-feet-deep ship grated on the sandy bottom of the shallows at that point. To be sure we were there in the time of year when the waters of the Volga are at their lowest; in May the river has twice the breadth to which it dwindleth in September, and there is then more movement and life upon the stream. We passed hours without seeing a vessel of any description. At Chorney Yar the Mayor and his Deputy ushered the Governor of the province of Astrakhan to a cabin in the *Alexander II.* They, in their official costumes, afforded an interesting exhibition of the personnel of Russian local government. The Mayor, evidently a peasant, wore a gilt laced coat, very like a Windsor uniform, and over his shoulders a massive chain—of brass I should think—which at odd moments, when his worship fancied himself unobserved, he adjusted to a nice diagonal upon his wide chest. He looked as com-

fortable in his gorgeous apparel as the Shah did in his diamond-breasted coat when seated upon a high chair at some of the London entertainments.

We glide on over the stream, running between low sandy banks across the steppe of Astrakhan. The water of the Volga pales from the appearance of burnished gold to that of molten silver as the lovely tints of the southern sunset give place to the cool twilight. What a picture those four Calmuck fishermen, with their immense circular caps of white fur, their swarthy faces with the clearly-marked Mongol features, their pink, blue, and white garments would make! Their rudely-constructed boat, with a bow rising from the water and sharpened to the shape of a pike's mouth, is grotesquely painted. On the high, square stern is a cartoon representing a yellow lion, with face averted from the object of pursuit, chasing a lady in short costume among a grove of trees. The evening sun bathes them in splendour; their squalor looks like glory; a pelican, whose natural colour is a dirty white, flaps its yard-long wings and projects its pouched bill over the water before them—a gilded bird; even the misery of their reed-roofed hut, with walls of crumbling sandy mud, is metamorphosed into beauty, and far in the distance, across the unvarying level, the sunlight marks the green cupolas of the Orthodox Cathedral of Astrakhan—a town mainly Mongol, partly Russian,

where the Volga at last pours its waters through many and long mouths into the Caspian.

Within a week we have passed in the same boat from one of the best bear-hunting grounds in all Russia, a forest of fir near Kazan, to this strange town, to which Russian gentlemen come for the Indian sport of "pig-sticking," which is much practised in the neighbourhood of Astrakhan, a town in which the scanty mixture of Russian houses with the mud-built huts of Calmuck Tartars proclaims the remotest borders of European civilisation. There is nothing very strange to see in Astrakhan except the houses of the Tartars and the curious worship in their pagodas. Perhaps the best thing in the place is the caviare, for which Astrakhan is famous. This delicacy is, however, being obtained at cruel and ruinous cost to the sturgeon fisheries of the Volga. Russians say that caviare is nowhere so good as in Astrakhan, and certainly the damp turnip seed, or that which looks like turnip or rape seed, sold in London as caviare, has very little resemblance to the greenish, fresh dainty which one obtains, though not very cheaply, in Astrakhan. Each particle of the caviare of Astrakhan is three times as large, apparently from mere freshness, as that sold in London; the colour is different and the flavour as unlike as that which distinguishes fresh grapes from raisins.

Moored at Astrakhan after six days' journey on the river, we cannot but reflect how vastly greater would be the Russian Power if the Volga had the uniform depth of the Thames; if instead of flowing through two thousand five hundred miles of the poorest land in Europe, it watered such soils as those of Berks and Bucks, and if in place of emptying itself into a closed and shallow sea, it were a highway for the commerce of the world. Even here at the quays of Astrakhan, the steamboat, drawing only eight feet of water, which is to carry us down the whole length of the Caspian, cannot approach; we must be tugged in a flat-bottomed barge for sixty miles or more through the delta of the Volga to where the vessel lies anchored in the sea, and when we have boarded her we shall pass yet another sixty miles over the Caspian before we shall get into five fathoms of water. Six months after we had quitted this region, we read in the *Times* the scheme of an American engineer who proposed to raise in forty years the surface of the Caspian five-and-twenty feet, to a level with the waters of the Black Sea, by cutting a small channel, which in that long period would be scooped by the effluent water to the size of a ship canal. Our recollection of various heights of the shores of the Caspian is not in an engineering sense precise, but we would suggest to this "American engineer" the practical consideration whether his plan

if carried out would not submerge Astrakhan and a large part of Southern Russia; it would certainly obliterate the Russian station of Ashurade, so important for the maintenance of Russian influence in Persia, and it would conceal for ever the Persian landing-places on the Caspian, together with the town of Resht, and much of the most productive land in the dominions of the Shah.





CHAPTER VI.

Louis the Fourteenth and the Tsar—Russian Church and State—Empress Anne's buffoon—Prayers for the Tsar—The Russian press—Censorship—Press regulations—The *Moscow Gazette*—Difficulties of journalists—The *Vedomosti*—The *Russki Mir*—Russia not Russian—Foreign races—New military system—The Emancipation of the serfs—The Communal System—Bad farming—Ignorance of the peasantry—The corn trade—Complaints from Odessa—Resurrection of Sebastopol—Corn from Russia and United States—The Artel of Odessa—Demands of Odessa merchants—A Viceroy wanted—English interests in Russian corn—The soil of Russia—The conquests of Russia—Contrast with Persia—Borrowed money—Unprofitable Railways—Revenue of Russia—Produce of Poll-tax—Privileged citizens.

IN the great library of St. Petersburg there is preserved a writing exercise—a caligraphic study—done in the days of his childhood by Louis the Fourteenth of France. Six times at least the little hand of the future Sovereign was instructed to pen the following sentiment:—" *L'hommage est deue aux roys ; ils font ce qu'il leurs plait.*" ("Homage is due to kings; they do as they please.") We shall be more kind to the memory of monarchs when we remember how they have been trained by sycophants. Nowhere is the royal office exalted higher than in Russia, where every human creature holds life and

liberty at the good pleasure of the Tsar. Except the Sultan, the Tsar has no peer in Europe ; and it is no wonder if the solemn loneliness of his elevation impairs the nervous system and menaces the sanity of members even of the stalwart race of Romanoff.

Sprung from the Church of Russia, the Tsars are never dissociated from it. They are divine as well as imperial ; the Tsar is priest as well as king ; he is a miracle-worker upon the Neva ; he administers the sacramental bread and wine with his own hands at his coronation ; in short, like the Shah and the Sultan in their respective dominions, the Tsar is in the theory of Russian Government which stands for the present in place of a Constitution—"the Shadow of God." Members of other Imperial Houses may change their creed to win, or even to share a throne ; but it is not so with a Romanoff. In Russia, an Empire by no means homogeneous in population, this thorough and personal association of Church and State is the centre of the centripetal force which is grinding foreign races into Russians.

The grand ambition of the Emperor Nicholas and the high moral character and qualities of his successor, have in our time cleared the Russian Court and the exercise of its autocratic powers from the vagaries of a period when there was no responsibility to a dumb people, or even to the more enlightened opinion of Western Europe. The days in which, according to

respected authorities, the Empress Anne married one of her buffoons, himself a Prince of the Empire, to a Calmuck dwarf, and made them pass the first night after their wedding upon an ice couch in an ice house upon the Neva, are gone for ever. So too is the issue of such ukases as that by which Peter the Great sought to subdue heresy and the obstinacy of hairy sectaries by a decree prohibiting the wearing of beards, when every one who dared to present himself at the "Redeemer Gate" of the Moscow Kremlin with a beard upon his chin, was caught and fined; or that by which the Emperor Paul, in 1799, with the same object, forbade the use of shoestrings and the wearing of round hats. All this is gone, but the personal power of the Tsar continues. In all Russian churches the most earnest prayer—that without which no service is complete—that during which heads are most bowed and crossings are most frequent, is the prayer in which the welfare of the Tsar and of his House is implored. It has been said that a venturesome diplomatist once asked the Emperor Nicholas who was the most distinguished of his Majesty's subjects? And, according to report, the Tsar replied, that the most distinguished Russian was he whomsoever the Emperor honoured by speaking to him. Even Alexander II., the mildest and most modern of his line, could declare, "*La Russie c'est le Tsar*," more truly than the young copyist with whose name I

commenced this chapter, could say in after days of himself and France—“ *L'Etat c'est Moi.*”

The Russian Press is a sham, inasmuch as its existence leads the outside world to suppose that there is within the Empire a widely-based expression of public opinion. I am not now alluding to the censorship which forbids the utterance of progressive sentiments, or the full expression of hope for a constitutional régime, but to the initial fact in the just comprehension of this important matter, that the productions of the Russian Press are not open to more than one in a hundred of the Tsar's subjects, because of their ignorance of the meaning of letters. Every reader of a newspaper in Russia, of the most loyal and even servile of the issues from the Press, is, we may say, a marked man, because as a rule journals can only be obtained by subscription through the Post Office. Many visitors from our own country must have learnt by irritating experience the truth of this statement, when they have found their English newspapers sequestrated, day after day, because they were not subscribed for in this manner. In 1870, including printing of every sort and kind, there was but one printing-press in Russia for every sixteen thousand of the population.

The life of a journalist in Russia must be, to say the least, uneasy, if we may presume that he has any opinions of his own. There are two newspapers pub-

lished in St. Petersburgh which are not designed for the Russian people—the *Journal de St. Pétersbourg*, printed in French, and the *St. Petersburger Zeitung*, printed in German, the latter being the organ of the German-speaking people of Russia, as the former is of the Russian Foreign Office. These journals are, of course, valuable rather for information relating to external than to internal affairs. A writer long resident in Russia, one who has already attracted the unfavourable notice of the Tsar's Government for his too accurate and well-informed acquaintance with Imperial arrangements, has lately described Russian newspapers and the régime to which they are subject. He says of the censorship, that "it appertains to the department of the Minister of the Interior, and is carried out either by special committees, as at St. Petersburgh, Moscow, Warsaw, and Odessa, or by individual censors in such towns as Kieff, Kazan, Riga, Dorpat, Mittau, Revel, and Wilna, who have to report their decisions for confirmation to the Chief Board of Censors at St. Petersburgh. The committees are composed of a president and three senior and six junior censors, with an inspector of printing-offices and book dépôts, and his assistants. The president and three chief censors meet at least once a week, when the various manuscripts and journals are registered, and either licensed or prohibited. All writings which are directed, first, against the dogmas of the

National Church, secondly, against the form of Government existing in Russia, and especially against the person of the Emperor, or any member of the Imperial family; thirdly, against morality; and fourthly, those containing offensive attacks on any private person, or calumnies of any kind, are prohibited by the censorship. No communication respecting the Imperial family may be printed until permission has been obtained from the Minister of the Imperial Court. Not only writings, but pictures and music are subject to the censorship; and care is taken to prohibit the latter when anything resembling the airs of the Polish insurgents is discovered to have been introduced. It is left to the discretion of the editors whether they will place themselves under the preliminary preventive censorship or not. In the latter case, they are subject to the control of the Press Director—an official also belonging to the Ministry of the Interior. Under this régime, articles are not subject to official examination and revision before they make their appearance in the columns of the paper; although in cases where the Government has had an inkling of some more than usually dangerous effusion, the whole issue has been seized as it left the printing machine. The usual method of proceeding—which in its main features appears to have been borrowed from the Press Laws of the second French Empire—is, for the head authority of the particular branch of the public

service that considers itself unwarrantably assailed to lay a complaint before the Press Director, should he indeed not have already taken the initiative. In either case, he gravely cautions the offending printer to be more careful for the future. A repetition of the offence is followed by a repetition of the warning; but should three such remonstrances prove ineffectual, the offending periodical is suspended for a period not exceeding three months. If on its reappearance it obstinately persists in its former course, it receives three further warnings, and is finally suppressed. A preliminary caution too is sometimes sent round to the different editors, forbidding them to mention a certain subject at all; or enjoining them to take only a particular view of it. This was especially the case with regard to the Khiva Expedition. For accidentally disregarding a similar injunction, the *Moscow Gazette* (*Moscauer Zeitung*)—the organ of the German element in Central Russia, and most ably conducted by M. Katkof—recently underwent a temporary suspension."

This system is not calculated to give a fresh, progressive, vigorous, and independent tone to the Press of Russia. The Press Director is, under this régime, virtually the editor of the whole Press. The writer above quoted says: "The larger St. Petersburgh and Moscow papers are almost all under his control." If an English statesman were in friendly talk on

this subject with such men as Prince Gortschakoff or the Grand Duke Constantine, men of liberal mind and large acquaintance with the forces that mould and govern the actions of mankind, I am sure he would be told that the Russian Press is not injuriously controlled; that the Government of the Tsar would not only sanction, but that it desired, that reforms and even radical changes in the mode of government should be discussed and examined. But how? It cannot be doubted that a journalist desiring, say the spread of education, and convinced that it will never come until representative institutions are established, which shall in some measure control and determine the action of Government, may express an opinion "that if it should seem good to his Imperial Majesty, our august Imperator, in the progress of the century, and when to the wisdom of his Government it shall appear that the Russian people are fitted to bear the burden of so great responsibility, then, if it please the Tsar to establish representative institutions, these will further the work of civilisation." But he dare not say that such institutions are good and ought to be established without showing that he regards the existing order of government as the very best that human hands, assisted by celestial influences, could construct, and that he desires nothing except through the bounty of the Tsar and his Majesty's Government.

Occasionally the Russian papers exhibit their differences from each other in a leaning to Germany or to France, either tendency not being sufficiently strong or external in its aims or offensive to the Government to bring down upon them the interference of the Press Director. A Russian journal which desires a successful, untroubled existence must turn its eyes from the acts of Government, bestowing now and then indiscriminate praise without scrutiny.

The writer to whom I am already indebted gives a fine example with reference to the *Wjedomosti*, a paper founded by Peter the Great, and which used to represent the Russian Liberal party. A few months ago "its editor, M. Korsch, who by his sympathy in the cause of reform has helped to raise it in public opinion, was summoned before the Minister of the Interior and told that the paper was of such Radical tendencies that he must resign the control of it. The editor sought to mollify the Ministerial anger by offering to make certain changes in his staff, but without effect; and as in Russia, in matters connected with the Press, a Ministerial has all the force of an Imperial ukase, nothing remained but to quietly obey, when the paper was placed under the immediate supervision of the Ministry of Public Instruction, and supplied with an entirely new staff, appointed on the express condition of publishing as leading articles all communications which the Ministry may think proper.

to forward, and of defending the Ministry itself on all occasions through thick and thin." One is not surprised to learn that even in Russia under these circumstances "influence and circulation alike have been dwindling away." Only those who have nothing to lose can afford to attack the Government in Russia. M. Korsch, the denounced editor of the *Wjedomosti*, "endeavoured to buy the *Russki Mir*, or *Russian World* [the organ of General Tchernayeff], at that time under suspension. It seems that its proprietor, finding he was losing money, hit upon the expedient of attacking the War Office, both with regard to the administration of Turkestan and the Kirghiz rebellions of a few years ago, until he succeeded in getting his paper suspended, hoping that things would take a turn for the better in three months, when he proposed to start afresh with all the prestige pertaining to a martyr—always a certain advantage under a despotic form of government."

There can be no question that the neglect of social improvement and reform, when the work is much less conspicuous than the emancipation of the serfs (which no power but that of the Tsar could decree, as it affected the nobles in their property) is in no small degree due to the misdirected training of Russian Statesmen. In the absence of representative institutions and of a free Press, politicians find in the line of diplomacy and the field of foreign affairs the only road

by which it is possible to arrive at a great reputation. The eyes and thoughts of Russian Statesmen are in consequence averted from their country, and their ears are closed to appeals in the language of Russia. There is no free and widely-studied debate in which they can hope to win influence by making a great name throughout the Empire ; the only path to distinction is by successful manipulation of Russian influence upon external politics, by wielding the pen which is weighted, at the advice of the writer, with the armed forces of Russia, or the sword which leads those forces to battle and conquest.

And it must be acknowledged that the work of leading Russia from a system of government which has resemblance in system more to that of the Sultan than to any other Government of Europe, is beset with many and great difficulties. Russia is not yet Russian. All the pressure of the superincumbent machinery of Government, exercised in the name of God as well as of the Tsar, has not as yet resulted in a fusion of the diverse populations of the Empire. To Germany, and to her war with France, from which he wisely held aloof, the Tsar is indebted for the establishment of a military system which, in spite of its obvious faults in diverting productive labour and diminishing the wealth of Russia, is, in fact, the most powerful agency which, perhaps, in the circumstances of that Empire, could have been devised by

the Tsar, not only for the amalgamation of his heterogeneous subjects, but also for securing progress in general education. In Russia in Europe there are Mahomedans speaking dialects of Turkish and Arabic ; Poles clinging to their national language, and German-speaking people of whom probably one million are actually natives of *Vaterland* and aliens in Russia. In the towns, the Mahomedan, the Pole, and the German keep as far as possible aloof from each other and from the Russian. They do not intermix or intermarry. The poor of Warsaw do not understand the Russian language. The German colonies upon the Volga are distinguished not only for the general superiority of their houses, but throughout their life for a higher standard of comfort than is common in the Russian towns—a result of their superior education. And in the densely-populated Mahomedan quarters of towns such as Kazan and Saratof, there are multitudes of people preserving their religion, their customs, and their race unmixed, though they are regarded, like the Jews of Odessa, with dislike and contempt by their Muscovite masters, who do not forget or forgive the barbarities practised by the forefathers of these Tartars upon the persons and the buildings of their own ancestors. There is no pretence of affection or sympathy between the German-speaking people and the genuine Russians. This is perhaps most conspicuous in the Baltic pro-

vinces, where in line with the treatment of native Germans there is always a train laid which may be exploded at any moment into a *casus belli* by the Chancellor of either Empire. Germans in the North and Jews in the South are hated not only because their presence is inharmonious with Panslavonian ideas, but rather for their superior success in trade and commerce. The poor Mahomedans have no such guilt, but it is traditional policy with the faithful of the Eastern Church to trample upon Islam.

The new military system of Russia which excepts neither creed nor race, which carries the youth of all, German, Polish, Mahomedan, as well as Russian, far away from home, to make all alike soldiers of the Tsar, is the severe but effectual school in which these distinctions are being most effaced. One can see this in the streets, in the comradeship of oblique-eyed Tartars with bright Armenians from the Caucasus, of golden-haired boys from Finland with native Russians from the South, all speaking, or trying to speak, the language in which they are drilled, and by the knowledge of which they can alone hope to win higher pay and improved position. In every branch of the military service there are some educational facilities and even requirements. To these the troops are led by self-interest, and in some cases by stern punishments. Every impulse in the direction of personal advantage suggests to them to make the Russian

language their own, and to direct their spiritual ideas towards that truest index of national loyalty—the Russian Church. The Russian military system is probably accomplishing as great a social reformation as that which was achieved by the abolition of serfdom.

That grand measure, the main glory of the present reign, has not yet effected all the improvement of the Russian peasant and his tillage which the most sanguine of its advocates expected would immediately follow the operation of the great ukase of 1861, and the belligerent power of Russia is reduced because of the unimproving condition of agriculture. Primarily this is due to the general ignorance and poverty of the peasantry; and secondarily to the land system and the onerous taxation of Russia. It was very absurd to expect that twenty-two millions of people would, at a stroke of the Tsar's pen, advance by a leap from the display of the characteristics of slavery to the exhibition of the virtues of people who have for ages sustained the ennobling cares and the responsibilities of personal freedom. It may be said, without fear of contradiction, that the Russian peasantry will never be as the rural population of Germany, or Switzerland, or even of less educated France, until they too are instructed, and until they, like those, are accustomed to the exercise of a substantial and duly responsible share in the Govern-

ment of the country. In many villages or communes of Russia, the peasant is disposed to say that the Emperor's benign policy has done him no good, inasmuch as it has resulted in giving him a harder master in the commune than he had in the proprietor. The advances which the Government has made to the peasantry for the enfranchisement of their lands, as well as the revenue resulting from taxation, are secured by making each commune equally with each individual responsible for payment. In 1872 the State had advanced no less than 80,000,000*l.* in respect of 66,000,000 acres, and if the peasant fails to pay to the commune his due share of the interest and sinking fund upon the aggregate sum which stands against the name of the village and its local government in the books of the Empire, he is of course not unlikely to meet with severity from his fellows, who must make good any deficiency on the part of lazy or dissolute defaulters.

Perhaps at this point we may usefully make a brief, and therefore necessarily imperfect, reference to the Russian land system, merely in order to exhibit the blighting effect of the communal system upon agriculture. In the primitive state, the Russian people used land, and when that was exhausted went further afield for more. By degrees, in fertile places, when there was no more land to be had, this method began to assume the aspect of private property by

right of possession. But the community increased, the land did not; the fulfilment of the obligations of individuals to the State and to proprietors, were demanded and could not be met, according to Russian ways of agriculture, unless every man had land from which to earn his contribution to the general liability. So it came about that the system of periodical redistribution of the cultivated land by each commune was established, and under this system the Russian peasant has no security of tenure, no certainty as to his payment to the commune, and through the commune to the State, for these things are determined by the circumstances of his neighbours. Mr. D. M. Wallace, who has lived in Russia, says :—“The allotment of the land is by far the most important event in Russian peasant life, and the arrangement cannot be made without endless talking and discussion. After the number of shares for each family has been decided, the distribution of the lots gives rise to new difficulties. The families who have plentifully manured their land, strive to get back their old lots, and the commune respects their claims so far as these are consistent with the new arrangement ; but it often happens that it is impossible to conciliate private and communal interests, and in such cases the former are sacrificed in a way that would not be tolerated by men of Anglo-Saxon race.”

This will account in a great measure for the inefficiency of Russian agriculture where the communal system prevails, but that is not universal, and greater intelligence would bring about a reform in the method of Russian agriculture, which is much needed. A three course system of farming—one field rye or wheat, one field spring-corn (oats, &c.), and one field fallow—obtains over nearly the whole of European Russia.

This inferior condition of the Russian people affects not only their agriculture, but also their foreign trade. Odessa is perplexed because the corn trade from that port is dwindling, and we are told, upon official authority, that “a peculiarity of the bills in circulation in South Russia is, that 10 per cent. of them are given or endorsed by persons who cannot sign their own names, but get it done by proxy at a notary’s, and from 20 to 30 per cent. more are omitted, and endorsed by parties who can only just sign their names, and are not able to write anything in addition.” The Odessa Committee on Trade and Manufactures have reported to the Council for Trade and Manufactures in St. Petersburg, that the commerce of their town, by far the most important in South Russia, “is not only undergoing a temporary crisis, but is actually entering a period of absolute decline.” The “temporary crisis” is due to the failure of the two last harvests; and Vice-Con-

sul Webster reports from Kherson that, "nearly everybody in South Russia will be bankrupt" if the harvest of this year is not sufficient. "The commercial banks," he writes, "whose principal occupation now is renewing or prolonging old bills, have been assisted by the State bank, and will be able to make way till the probable result of the harvest of 1876 is known. Should the harvest fail, a financial crash is inevitable." The Odessa committee find that Nicolaiff and Sebastopol, having become places of export, are drawing away their trade, and that much of the produce in the fertile district of Kieff, which was formerly brought for shipment to Odessa, is now conveyed by railway to the ports of the Baltic, the freight from Königsberg to England being less than half that to Odessa, or in the proportion of three to seven.

"But it is not in the opening of these new outlets for Russian grain that the Committee see the danger to Odessa." "The competition of Nicolaiff, Sebastopol, or even Königsberg, could not prevent Odessa continuing to be the natural outlet for a tract of country quite sufficient for a large remunerative trade." The danger is one which threatens, not Odessa only, but all Russia; and it comes from the valley of the Mississippi—from the United States of America. Of the 9,000,000 to 14,000,000 quarters of foreign wheat required by England, the proportions

supplied by Russia and the United States have been as follows during the last seven years :—

	Russia. Per Cent.	United States. Per Cent.
1867	44	14
1868	32	18
1869	32	18
1870	38	21
1871	40	23
1872	51	24
1873	21	44

The Committee say they have no positive information for 1874, but they have reason to believe the result is less favourable to Russia than that of 1873. The figures given above show that in seven years Russia and the United States have, in this very important matter, changed positions. In 1867 Russia supplied 44 per cent. and the United States 14 per cent. of England's demand for foreign wheat; in 1873 the United States supplied 44 per cent. and Russia only 21 per cent. The Odessa Committee have no illusions; they indulge no hope that even a most prosperous harvest in Russia will turn the scale; but rather believe that the United States will take a still higher position among the grain producers of the world. Congress has granted 2,000,000 dollars for deepening the mouths of the Mississippi, and on the completion of these works the cost of the transport of

wheat from Chicago to England will be diminished by more than 50 per cent. The Odessa Committee see in a near future the United States "so absolutely the controller of the prices of the London market that we shall be utterly unable to compete with her." And in this race it must be admitted that they, in common with all Russian enterprise, are heavily weighted by the official system of the Empire. The Artel (Association of Workmen) has a monopoly of Custom House work, and the Committee find that the cost of the necessary Custom House formalities is, on the average, seven times, and, for some classes of goods, eleven times more than before this Association was formed. It is estimated that the annual sum paid to the Artel of Odessa amounts to 400,000 roubles, "and this for no service rendered, as the Artel in no way dispenses with the necessity of employing the workmen who were employed before the institution of the Artel." The Committee further complain that the inspection of goods commences at eleven and closes at two, which they think a somewhat absurd indulgence of Russian bureaucracy. That powerful caste—for the official class has a tendency to become such—is, of course, directly interested in maintaining the troublesome system by which "the declarations required for the formalities of clearing goods pass through twenty-nine different hands."

But impartial critics must admit that, while stating nothing untrue, the Odessa merchants have not been careful to relieve their picture, and that they employ the very dark colouring of their foreground to show up the remedial measures which, with the natural dependence of people living under a despotic and protective system, they hope for from the Tsar. Such tactics are natural. When Marshal MacMahon was Governor General of Algeria, a disastrous earthquake occurred, by which hundreds of houses were destroyed, and many people impoverished. I shall never forget the scene, nor the spectacle of the emigrants crowding round his Excellency, and declaring that if the Emperor did not rebuild their houses they would return to France. In like manner these *enfants d'état* of Russia want the Tsar to make Odessa a manufacturing centre, in spite of the facts that it is bounded on one side by the Euxine, that fuel is scarce, and that water must be paid for. Very characteristic of the evils of Russian Government is their proposal to exempt manufactures from all taxation, and their belief that the appointment of a Viceroy instead of a Governor General "would be the best guarantee for the effectual carrying out of the measures they have suggested." They want the State to help them to wash wool, and to make dépôts for colonial goods, regardless of the fact that the proprietor of the

only wool-washing establishment in Odessa lately hanged himself, a suicide which was followed by that of the principal importer of colonial goods.

But perhaps England has most direct interest in the statements which have reference to the export of wheat. From a thoughtless glance at the figures, held up by the Odessa merchants, it might be supposed that our supply from Russia had in seven years fallen off by more than one-half, from 44 per cent. in 1867, to 21 per cent. in 1873. But this is not so. To say nothing of the increase from Sebastopol and Königsberg, the export of cereals from Odessa in 1867 amounted to 2,674,978 quarters, and to 2,648,000 quarters in 1873; while the value of the export in the latter year was greater by 15,200,169 roubles than in 1867. In 1874 there was an increase in quantity as well as value; and while we learn from these facts that the Russian supply is not declining, we cannot escape the conviction forced upon us by the table of figures given above, that Russian agriculture is stationary in comparison with the boundless and successful activity of the United States.

In all this there is much that may be amended with advantage; but Russia is not a fertile country. We hear of it as a great corn-exporting land, and are apt to compare it as a whole in fertility with such rich soils as those of the Danubian provinces, or the alluvial valleys of British India and of the United

States. In this important matter it is hardly possible to make a greater error. The present writer has visited Russia twice, in north and south, has passed leisurely through the length and to a great extent the breadth of the European Empire, and has also seen something of the Asiatic dominions of Russia. In these travels no fact is more constantly impressed upon the mind than the unequalled poverty of its soil. From the frontier of Russia west of Warsaw to St. Petersburgh, and from the capital through Moscow and Nijni to Astrakhan, is a journey of about three thousand miles. The constant feature of that route is white sand, the worst and most hopeless, thankless soil for cultivation. There is no natural fertility; and this is exhibited by the surest proofs. There are none but stunted trees other than the pine and fir, and the landscape is therefore without a charm which is present in every English county. It may well be doubted whether the scrubby wastes of the Crimea would repay the cost of cultivation, if that were attempted; but there can be no question that, taking the Empire from north to south, and east to west, Russia is, and will remain, the poorest country in Europe. There are rich lands in Russia in the south-west, but the existence of these, to which the Emperor Nicholas would gladly have added the territory now known as Roumania, does not neutralise the fact that for the

most part the Empire consists of plains of white sand, which if Central Russia were rainless as Central and Southern Persia, would be arid and irreclaimable desert, because there are no mountains in which water might be stored for irrigation. It is noteworthy also that the recent conquests of Russia in Asia have been of the same quality, and so far from adding to the wealth of the Empire are probably burdensome to the revenue. Except where Persian territory borders upon the Caspian in its southern extremity, Russia is sole owner of the shores of that Sea; but there is hardly a mile of her large frontage upon the Caspian which for agricultural purposes is worth the cost of occupation.

These facts augment the anxieties of her neighbours. Not only on the Pruth, but east of the Black Sea, where her Georgian and Persian conquests border upon the Shah's province of Azerbaijan, and again east of the Caspian, where the Attrek marks her off from the Persian province of Astrabad, Russia looks upon territory of great natural fertility which is not her own. And in her approach to the northern borders of India she occupies a position wherein this contrast of her own poverty with her neighbour's wealth is even more remarkable.

In spite, however, of the terrible weight of her increasing debt and unproductive expenditure, her people appear to be cheaply governed if we compare

them with other populations of Europe. But as they are poorer than any other people of that continent the comparison would be unfair. It would be a very nice question to decide how far they have been enabled to support their burdens by the largely unproductive expenditure upon railways and other public works, the cost of which has been chiefly provided for by English capital. The revenue gathered from a population which approaches (including the Asiatic dominions of Russia) ninety millions, does not amount to 77,000,000*l.*—much less than 1*l.* per head. Great as is the cost of the Russian army—23,716,000*l.* in 1874—they “drank themselves out of it” with the exhibition of a surplus; for this people who, in company with all their northern neighbours to the extremity of Ireland, are among the most drunken in Europe, contributed 27,609,000*l.* in 1874 to the revenue by means of excise duties on spirits and other intoxicating drinks. By this means, and by the poll-tax, nearly three-fifths of the revenue are provided, the poll-tax yielding in the same year no less than 122,000,000 roubles. To what extent Russian ability in the matter of taxation has been assisted by the annual expenditure of 12,000,000*l.* to 15,000,000*l.* of borrowed money, I shall not attempt to determine. But it is clear that Russia has borrowed about 70,000,000*l.* for the construction of railways, and I cannot accept the argument of the

Economist that this great sum "is at least no more than can be afforded, even if the railways are directly and indirectly unprofitable, because the interest of these loans is charged in the accounts, and there is still a balance of revenue and expenditure, or even a small surplus." To uphold this proposition it would be necessary to prove that Russia can maintain this equilibrium when the annual expenditure of 15,000,000*l.* of borrowed money is discontinued. And from all that I have lately seen of Russia I have no confidence in the statement that this outlay, which now produces an income of only 2,132,000*l.*, will be remunerative. Of course I do not deny that railways are necessary to the existence of the Russian Empire.

The Government of Russia rewards distinguished citizens and successful traders who are loyal and respected, by making them free from all taxation. There are probably four or five thousand of these privileged, untaxed, citizens in Moscow, and it is not ordained that paying nothing they shall have no voice in the general expenditure. Quite the contrary. Owners of a hundred arpents of land, which is the qualification for one who has the legal privileges of a "proprietor," elect in great part the Provincial Assemblies, which elect the provincial judges; and perhaps it would be impossible for any system to be more strongly marked with injustice than one in

which all those most able to pay are exempt from taxation, and have a powerful voice in the election of judges who cannot afford to disregard the claims of important constituents because their tenure of the judicial office is only for three years, at the expiration of which they must, if they desire to continue their functions, again submit their candidature to the Provincial Assemblies. It should, however, be said that these provincial judges cannot sentence a prisoner to more than one year's confinement, and cannot deal with civil cases in which the amount claimed is over five hundred roubles.





CHAPTER VII.

The Delta of the Volga—Persian passengers—The *Constantine*—Petrovsk—Derbent—“Le Feu Éternel”—Persian merchandise—Persian clothing—A coloured deck load—Russian trio of spirits—“Un Knut Russe”—Baku—“Dominique”—Dust of Baku—The Khan of Baku—The Maiden’s Tower—Russian Naval Station—Petrolia in Asia—Baku oil carts—The Petroleum Wells—Kalafy Company—Fire worship—Parsees and Persians—The Indian Priest—The Surakhani Temple—Manufacture of petroleum.

WE quitted the line of our travels at Astrakhan for this digression into the general affairs of Russia. The delta of one great river is very much like that of another; and there are no peculiar features about the delta of the Volga. For fourteen hours, the long barge in which we sat, in company with nearly a hundred passengers (mostly Persians, many from the provinces of Old Persia, which have long been Russian, and a few from the dominions of the Shah), was tugged by a small steamboat from Astrakhan to the steamship *Constantine*, which was moored in the shallow waters of the Caspian. We were alongside about two in the morning of the last day of September. There was a dreadful pell-mell: the Persian passengers being anxious to secure the sheltered places on the deck for their bales of pillows

and carpets, their caged canaries and pipe-cases. Bags and bundles were hastily lifted from the barge, and descended like a shower upon the decks of the *Constantine*; and in the cabins of the first class the pressure of Armenians of doubtful cleanliness was so great, that we had difficulty in obtaining attention. When at last our cabin was lighted there was, of course, no bedding, and, to our horror, the walls and roof were covered with crawling creatures of small and suspicious form. They vanished at the candle-light; and observing the preference of these insects for darkness, the sleep we had upon the *Constantine* was consequently accomplished by illumination of our cabin.

The *Constantine* is not a Russian-built ship; she, like all the vessels of the same line, came from Great Britain in pieces, and was put together upon the shores of the Caspian. After steaming about fifty miles from her moorings near the entrance to the Volga, the *Constantine* lay to in twenty-four feet of water, on account of a strong east wind, which in the deeper sea would have caused the ship to roll so as to jeopardise the piles of Persian baggage upon the main deck. The carpets and rich silks would certainly have been soaked with the very salt water of the Caspian. In two days we reached the harbour of Petrovsk, a straggling town upon the edge of a mountainous country, from which there is a good

road to Tiflis; and at the next station we could see the high walls of Derbent, as we anchored beneath them in moonlight. This is a fortress which Peter the Great wrested from Persia in 1722.

When travellers are told in Russian, French, and German that on their way down the Caspian Sea it is absolutely necessary for their information and advantage that they should stay at Baku, and see the “everlasting fire,” they are naturally inclined to yield to this concurrence of advice. So it happened that when the *Constantine* rounded the promontory on which Baku stands, and facing suddenly northwards approached the long range of bare, brown hills which shelter this chief town and port of the Caspian from the coldest winds, we were prepared to make Baku our home for a week at least.

I am sorry I am not a painter, and cannot render in colours the aspect of the vessel we were about to leave. What an Oriental picture the after-deck would have made! There was not a foot of space which was not covered with Persian carpets. The deck had been quartered out among themselves with fair regard to the balance of power, by the Persian traders returning from Nijni; and in groups of three or four they lay entrenched beneath their gorgeously-coloured saddle-bags and bundles, stuffed with rich shawls, with finely-worked saddle-cloths, and with silks of most beautiful colours. The barricades between each

group were sometimes four or five feet in height, and there were many curious boxes and cages containing canaries, whose yellow plumage and sweet song are much esteemed both at Baku and in Tehran. There was not a man among them who did not wear a fine turquoise set in a leaden ring, though all were third-class passengers ; not one without the tall hat of black fur or felt, or without robes of those soft colours which the Western world of fashion has but lately learned to love. They were the same Persians—at least in manners and appearance—as those whose acquaintance we all made years and years ago in the “Arabian Nights’ Entertainments.” A patriarch, with nails and beard dyed red with khenna, stood blowing out his water-pipe—the Persians call it “kalian”—in preparation for the shore. Three young men sat near us in outer robes of black, which, like the covering of some tropical insect, heightened the effect of the bright colouring of their bodies, which were covered with tunics of red, green, and purple, decorated with silver and gold. They were on a coverlid of red silk, quilted upon a thick lining of cotton wool, and behind each man lay a richly-coloured pillow. The three were pecking, like fowls in a yard, but with their fingers, at the half of a water-melon, the inside of which had been slashed into pieces with a knife. In another “encampment” one who might, as he wore the green

turban, be a descendant of the Prophet of Islam, was reading to the others from the Persian version of “Joseph and Potiphar’s wife.” In the Persian, the encounter of virtuous Joseph with the amorous Zulaikha, is worked up into a tale of infidelity, passion, and revenge, and, for obvious reasons, is very much in vogue in Persia; as popular as a book can be in a country where publication in finely-written manuscript is still common, and where there is virtually but one book—the Koran.

The passage from Astrakhan has been a very rough one; and we may add, that all Byron has said of the fate of the traveller in the “Euxine” might be told with equal truth of the nauseous swell of the Caspian. We ventured, as members of Mr. Plimsoll’s Committees, to ask the captain why he allowed his maindeck to be so loaded and encumbered that the sailors could only pass to the wheel by walking upon the bulwarks of the vessel. “Ah,” he replied, “these Persian people wont give up their baggage. They would cry if I sent it down into the hold. They think everybody is going to rob them, and that nothing out of sight is safe. As a fact, I believe they do rob each other whenever they get an opportunity. They would rather risk having their carpets and things washed with sea-water on deck than put them safe in the hold.” Certainly our fellow passengers were foolish as to their baggage;

but as to themselves, almost any corner of the open deck was better than to endure the vile atmosphere of the cabins, where the smells of a Russian dram-shop and of an unventilated Spanish prison seemed to be mingled in almost suffocating odour. Early in the voyage we had paid the penalty of opening our cabin window in having our bedding soaked by a huge wave; and, to the indignation of the steward, the waters from our window had passed beneath our door into public view. There was the alternative of the deck-saloon, where no one would suffer a window to be open; where everybody smoked tobacco, and spat in every direction except that of the neglected spittoon; where there was suspended a tinselled image of St. Constantine, patron saint of our vessel, whose fixed eyes stared upon the invariable Russian trio of bottles, containing spirits, brown, green, and white, all ardent and intoxicating. Both captain and passengers seemed much more devoted to the spirits than to the saint. The presence of English names upon every part of the ship betrayed the backwardness of mechanical skill in Russia—a country which seems to be full of kindly, good-natured people, steeped for the most part above the ears in superstition, but loyal to their Church and Tsar to a degree almost fanatical, and quite beyond comparison with the sentiments of the less simple-minded people of Western Europe.

"Voilà un knut Russe, monsieur," laughed a Russian officer in my ear. We were approaching the wooden quay, where the police of Baku were thrusting the crowd of too urgent porters back from the gangway and threatening them with short but terrible whips, a representation in miniature of the "knout," of which we read in childhood with so much horror at the barbarity of Russian punishments. The porters, some with huge pads on the back of the neck, others carrying cords in their hands with which to balance or secure their loads, were a body of strong men, twenty or thirty at least, whose bare limbs of every shade, from the ebony of Africa to the copper of Southern Persia, and the redder tinge of native Baku, protruded from rags which seemed to have neither shape nor fastening. The Baku policemen are a most peculiar institution. They wear a Circassian costume, with huge muff-shaped hats of white or black sheepskin; and, besides their lash, carry a long sword and a dagger. One must, however reluctantly, admit that something more than the "Move on" or "Stand back, can't you?" of our own Policeman X is needed to maintain order among Baku boatmen and porters. The former have a very savage appearance, which indeed is common to the boatmen of the Caspian. Waving aloft their spade-shaped oars, propellers as primitive as those of any Sandwich Islanders, they invoke with smiles and shouts, rising to screams

and shrieks, if their overtures do not receive attention, the descent of passengers into their boats; and the porters, who unite the powers of the camel to the pertinacious appetite—for baggage—of hungry jackals, are not easy to manage. We were about to engage three, when one seized upon our trunks and piling two together upon a high seat, passed a cord round the load, and with a face beaming with satisfaction at the prospect of a good job, bent almost double, and took the pile, like the howdah of an elephant, upon his back. Along the wooden jetty he led us to the street, and delivered his burden to the turbaned driver of one of several two-horsed carriages, better and handsomer than any which stand for hire in London, or in Paris, or St. Petersburgh. These carriages were all open barouches, clean and bright, as things may be where there is no rain or mud for many months. In Baku when, as often happens, these carriages are drawn by white or grey horses, the manes and tails are dyed pink, after the Persian manner.

When a stranger—a European—arrives in Baku, nobody seems to have any doubt as to his destination. In the first place he, with all his luggage, must desire to go to “Dominique.” If a European landed at Baku and said nothing he would be taken to “Dominique.” No one ever alludes to “the Hôtel d’Italie,” though that is synonymous with “Domi-

nique," who is in fact the landlord of that hotel. Along the quays, past the baths floating in the clear, bitter-salt sea, through the dusty Place, we drove to "Dominique," where, after surmounting the ground floor occupied with casks and stores, by a lengthy flight of wooden stairs, we were shown into rooms with floors thickly sanded by the sea breeze, each "furnished" with a bare bedstead and a chair. At our request "Dominique" slouched in, a man with a cigar in his mouth and earrings in his ears, spitting now and then as he approached—a man with the appearance of a Levantine sailor who had once been an Italian of Leghorn or Genoa. Dominique has none of the deferential manner of the average hotel-keeper. No fear of rivals haunts his mind. He is "Dominique," and if any one comes to Baku with sufficient money in his pocket a room in Dominique's house is his by a sort of right which Dominique does not question, but to the exercise of which he seems profoundly indifferent. The rooms are sandy, but so is all Baku, except where the streets are spread with a mixture of water and the dregs of petroleum; and if bedding is required, Dominique keeps a little in store for eccentrics from Western Europe, and will produce a scanty supply of linen for a consideration in the bill.

Dominique is a quaint, pleasant fellow, and from the spacious balcony points out, between puffs of his

cigar, the chief objects of interest in Baku. Peter the Great, he says, built that strong wall which surrounds the old town, when he had captured Baku from the Persians. But Russia, he adds, lost it again ; and it was not till the beginning of the present century that Baku became a part of the Russian Empire. He directs our eyes to the sombre, solid building, placed in a station of command where the town rises highest —the old palace of the Khans of Baku—now used as a military storehouse ; a building, in its fluted arches and in other features thoroughly Persian or Moorish, but, though very similar in style, infinitely inferior in design and workmanship to the palaces of the Deys of Tunis and Algiers. A merchant—an Armenian—joins us—there is much freedom and fellowship at Dominique's—and kindly volunteers a recital of the legend concerning "The Maiden's Tower," the most prominent building in Baku, a huge cylinder of masonry rising in the lower part of the town, which is somehow connected at present with the water supply of the place. The Khan, it appears, had a daughter—lovely, of course, like all the ladies of all the legends—whose will he desired to coerce—matrimonially, we need not say. The daughter, whose inclinations were opposed to her father's commands, ascended the tower, which the Khan was then building, and soon afterwards her lifeless body was carried from its foot.

Dominique ejaculates the Italian equivalent for “rubbish!” and points as more worthy of attention to the further side of the bay, to the white buildings of the Russian naval station, in front of which there are two steam corvettes lying at anchor. One looks with interest on these ships of war, imprisoned on this isolated, land-locked sea, destined never to meet with their equals or superiors under other flags, for Persia has no ships of war, cannot, must not, by Treaty with Russia, have them in the Caspian; and where is the possible enemy who will bring ships of war in pieces from the Tigris or the Black Sea to be put together in a hostile country? They have, however, a useful function in preventing piracy in the Caspian, and at no very distant day these vessels may be called upon to cover and protect with the fire of their guns the landing of Russian troops upon the Persian shore. The harbour of Baku is not only the best in the Caspian, but it is the only capacious, sheltered port in that sea.

At Baku rain rarely falls; the sky is generally cloudless, but if a man has the fixed popular belief that his life will endure until he has eaten the proverbial “peck of dirt” and no longer, then he will only expedite his end by coming to Baku. It is more dusty than San Francisco or Odessa, the dustiest towns of Europe and America, and one must be careful or he may swallow “the peck” in a month.

Baku is a part of Old Persia. Nine-tenths of the population are descendants of subjects of Shah Abbas. The manners and customs of the bazaars are thoroughly Persian. The old men, in striking contrast to their high hats of black fur, dye their beards bright red with khenna. Very few women of the superior class are to be seen. We arrived in company with many men who had been absent from their homes in Baku for months, trading at Nijni Novgorod, but no wives met this "husbands' boat" from Europe. The Persian women in Russian Baku rarely leave their homes. There were three or four shuffling along the quay with slippered feet, closely covered from the sight of man, and groups of washerwomen laboured in the ripples of the shore, who were careless as to any other exposure, so that they could clap something over their faces at sight of a passing stranger.

There is not a tree or shrub to be seen upon the arid hills and stony steppe, and the odour of naphtha is never out of the nostrils. Baku has for ages past been celebrated in the Eastern World for that which every one in the town who can speak three words of French calls *Le Feu Éternel*, and in these days—when her native population is sprinkled with sharp Armenians who would rake profits out of this or any other fire, and some streets are bordered with houses of European style—Baku presents the aspect of an Oriental town, conscious of coming greatness

and higher civilisation under a different system, when her subterranean riches shall have become better known and be more largely brought forth. Baku has "struck oil," and before many years are past, the world will hear much more of this obscure town—this Petrolia in Asia. The engines of the *Constantine*—the ship in which his Imperial Majesty the Shah traversed the Caspian—were driven with petroleum. Coal, the captain told us, costs eighteen and a half roubles per hour, while petroleum costs only one and a half roubles—a reduction from fifty shillings to four shillings. In three years Baku will be united by railway with Tiflis and the Black Sea, and then probably all the Russian steamships on the Euxine will be supplied with the same disagreeable but inexpensive fuel. The machinery for combustion reminded us of one of those pretty contrivances for blowing the spray of liquid scent about a drawing room. As the coarse residue of the petroleum—for it is the dregs or sediment only which is burned—pours in a thin, muddy stream from a tap near the door of each furnace, a jet of steam, generated by a coal fire, blows it into spray and thus it is consumed with an even heat throughout the furnaces of the engines.

All day long petroleum rolls into Baku in carts of the most curious pattern imaginable. A Neapolitan single-horse, two-wheeled carriage for fifteen people, is

unique, but it is commonplace in comparison with an oil-cart of Baku. Few men would have the courage to import a Baku oil-cart and drive it, even for a very high wager, through Regent Street or Pall Mall. Where is the man who would dare to pose himself there, perched and caged in a little railed cart, big enough to hold one barrel of petroleum, and lifted so high on wheels seven feet in diameter, that another huge tub can be slung beneath the axle, the whole thing being painted with all the colours of the rainbow and creaking loudly as it is drawn by a diminutive horse, the back of which is hardly up to a level with the axle? Yet the *exploiteurs* say that already they pay collectively not much less than 100,000/- a year for the cartage of oil in carriages of this sort. They were eager to show us the oil wells, and hopeful, as they are much in want of capital, that we should send them some meek and moneyed Englishmen. We set out to visit the "everlasting fire" and these mines of liquid wealth, in a dust-storm, with horses so active, that we might suppose they too were fed with naphtha. In the outskirts of Baku, where we saw a scorpion for the first time, the country is all dust and desolation—a desert in which every one with an original turn of mind may make his own road. For two or three miles along the shore of the bay, the many buildings in which the petroleum is refined by itself as fuel, pour forth dense

smoke, and at eight miles from the town are the springs. The average depth at which the oil is touched seems to be about a hundred and fifty feet. The wells are for the most part nine inches to a foot in diameter. From the first well we visited, a small steam engine with most primitive gear, was lifting about four hundred and fifty thousand pounds' weight of petroleum in a day. The oil is of greenish colour, and as it is drawn from the earth, is emptied into a square pit dug in the surface soil, from whence men take it in buckets and pour it into skins or barrels, the charge at the wells being at the rate of $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ per fifty pounds' weight of oil. At the works of the Kalafy Company, an Armenian concern, when their well was first opened, the petroleum burst up in a fountain nine feet in diameter, a part of which rose forty feet in the air. At all the wells, the oil is now raised in circular tubes about nine feet long and as many inches in diameter, with a valve at the lower end which opens on touching the ground and closes when the tube is lifted. This cylinder is lowered empty and raised again when filled with oil in less than two minutes. A man pulls the full tube towards a tub, into which its contents are poured, and through a hole in the tub the oil runs into the pit from which the skins and barrels are filled. We were assured that the Baku petroleum is of better quality than the oil of Pennsylvania, and that it is

less dangerous, because its flashing point of temperature is from thirty to forty degrees higher than that of the American product.

It is certainly very wonderful, upon a sandy plain, with not a tree nor a blade of grass in sight, to look upon a reservoir of liquid fuel thus drawn from this stony soil; yet to our thinking there was a spectacle much more curious, about twelve versts farther from Baku, when we came to one of the oldest altars in the world, erect and flaming with its natural burnt offering to this day. Surakhani is an ancient seat of probably one of the most ancient forms of worship. For unnumbered ages, the gas which is generated by this subterranean store of oil, identical with that which caused the Regent's Park explosion, has escaped through long-established and inaccessible fissures in the limestone crag of which the hills in the neighbourhood are composed, and the fire of this gas has lighted the prayers of generations of priests as it blazed and flared away to the heavens.

Fire-worship in Persia, of which until the eighteenth century Baku formed a part, is older than history. When we have passed about a thousand miles farther south, between Ispahan and Shiraz, we shall come, at the ruins of Istakr and Persepolis, upon authentic traces of the reigns of Cyrus, of Darius, of Xerxes and Artaxerxes. But the fire-worshipping period is older than Cyrus. We do not

know when the remnant of the fire-worshippers was driven southwards, nor precisely how far we are justified in assuming the Parsees of India to be their descendants. But we find the Parsees using as sacred books the "Zendavesta" of the Zoroastrians, and we know that at an obscure town between Kurrachee and Bombay there is a Parsee temple, the fire in which is regarded with peculiar reverence as the "oldest" fire in the world, the tradition among the Parsees being that this fire was originally brought in charred wood from a temple in Persia, and that it has never since been suffered to expire. It may be that the fire in this temple has been unextinguished for a period extending from before the time of Cyrus. "It is," says Professor Westergaard, "to this ante-Achæmenian period that I refer Zoroaster, and I find it therefore quite natural that he could have belonged to a remote and uncertain antiquity so early as in the fourth* century before Christ, when his name is first mentioned by Greek authors. The main accounts of his lore date, I think, from the period which they intimate, and their language, two cognate dialects of very distinctive character, possesses a greater store of grammatical forms and has an appearance less worn and consequently older than the old Persian in the descriptions of Darius, the nearest cognate branch."

* This may be a misprint in the preface to Westergaard's translation of the "Zendavesta."

For long, long ages the worship of these flaming issues of petroleum gas at Surakhani has been maintained by delegations of priests from India, who have died and been buried upon the spot, to be succeeded by other devotees from the same country. It would, of course, be possible to extinguish the blaze, if one were to choke the fissures; and the people about the place say that sometimes, when the wind rises to a hurricane, the fire is actually put out. The gas, however, can then at once be relighted with a match. We saw this done, not, as of yore, with mysterious incantations, and the terrified awe of superstitious worshippers, but—to what base uses may gods come!—in order to burn lime for Baku, and to purify the oil raised from the natural reservoir in which the gas is generated. We thought that never, perhaps, had we seen a man more to be pitied than the “poor Indian,” who is the successor of a long line of religiously-appointed guardians of this once wholly sacred spot. There the light of this lamp of Nature’s making flared on its formerly hallowed altar-place, maid-of-all-work to half a dozen degenerate Persians, now subjects of the Christian Tsar, who thought of nothing but making lime and of warming their messes of sour milk and unleavened bread. In another place the gas was conducted from the surface of the ground into a furnace, where it flamed beneath vats of petroleum, in the process of refining the native

oil by distillation. Surely there never was such a pitiful *reductio ad absurdum*! Before us stood the priest of a very venerable religion, which has always seemed to me to be one of the most noble and natural for a primitive people ; there he stood, ready for half a rouble to perform the rites of his worn-out worship, and there also was the object of his life-long devotion set to work as economic firing. Such a rude encounter of the old and the new, of ideality and utility, of the practical and the visionary, was surely never seen elsewhere.

I suspect that, as a Yankee would say, the worship of "*le feu éternel*" at Baku is almost played out. Of course, the enlightened Parsee worships God in the fire, and not the fire as God ; his theory being, I believe, that the God of Nature cannot be truly adored unless the worshipper has his attention fixed upon one of the elements—fire, air, earth, or water. Failing fire, a Parsee may pray in open air, or beside a tree or stream. The "poor Indian" of Surakhani complains bitterly that he is robbed of everything by the Persian workmen, of whom probably not one now sees any mystery at all in these flames issuing from the earth. They are every day engaged with an inflammable material, and not a few have made perilous acquaintance with the explosive properties of the gas which is emitted from petroleum ; yet but few accidents seem to occur.



CHAPTER VIII.

Bathing in the Caspian—The way to Europe—A tarantas—The Baku Club—Mihailovski Gardens—Leaving Baku—Lenkoran—Astara—Petroleum on deck—Enzelli—Persian boatmen—Mr. Consul Churchill, C.B.—Enzelli Custom House—Sadr Azem's Konak—The Shah's Yacht—Lake of Enzelli—Peri-bazaar—Province of Ghilan—Resht—Bazaar and “Green”—Women of Persia—Their street costume—Shopping in Bazaar—Riding in Persia—Chapar and Caravan—Kerjavas—A Takht-i-Rawan—Leaving Resht—Charvodars and Gholams—Lucky and unlucky days—Whips of iron—“Ul-lâh”—The Bell Mule—Houssein mounted—The first station—Our camp kitchen—A mud hovel.

WE had bathed every day in the buoyant waters of the Caspian; we had sailed two miles across the natural harbour to visit the Russian naval and military station, which will become still more important as a base for operations in Central Asia when the railway from the Caucasus is complete. We had become known to many of the Armenian exporters of petroleum, who continually implored us to send them a few British capitalists (as if such people were to be picked up in London for the trouble of stooping), so that their works may be extended, and the oil produced more cheaply. We had made acquaintance with a “tarantas,” and with the members of the Baku Club, before we prepared to quit that rising town.

If we had decided to return to Europe by Tiflis, we must have taken a tarantas, or rather, we must have purchased a tarantas, for no one lends or lets a suitable carriage for that five days' journey, over a road which is impassable for carriages of lighter construction than a tarantas. Where the return journey would cost more than the value of any vehicle in the country, hiring is of course out of the question. A tarantas is simply a strong carriage, securely fixed upon half a dozen horizontal fir poles, the pliancy of which (and being small trees they are not very elastic) stands for springs. The wheels are small, and very strong. To the carriage, sometimes three and sometimes seven horses are attached, according to the view which the postmaster at each station takes of the pocket of the traveller, of the engagements of his horses, and the condition of the road. The body of the tarantas is quite unfurnished. Some travellers from Baku make a seat by plaiting rope across from side to side of the carriage; but it is more usual to make a seat of some box or bundle, inasmuch as the traveller is expected to carry his luggage inside. A tarantas costs about fourteen pounds sterling, and at the end of the journey will probably be found unsaleable. In Dominique's yard at Baku there was a tarantas in which a British consul in Persia had travelled with his wife from Tiflis. Dominique had been told to sell it for the

owner ; but there it stood, rotting away with years of waiting for a purchaser.

As seen by light of the oil of petroleum, the Baku Club is a pleasant institution. There is a seaside garden at Baku in which a few shrubs are dragged through life by copious watering, applied daily. They look dusty and unnatural by daylight, and so do the gaily-painted wooden pavilions ; but at night, when the rippling sea can be heard between the pieces of music, the Club meets in the highest of these pavilions. The garden is then full of people, and there is no stint of the light of petroleum oil. None may mount the steps of this pavilion who are not of the Club. The pavilion is open to the garden, and is set out with refreshment and card tables. In this place the Russian officers of the station and the wealthier of the townsfolk of Baku, together with their wives and families, appear to spend the happiest hours of their existence.

The aggregated babble of their talk, a good deal of it real "coffee-house babble," and the strains of the music from this Mihailovski Garden, fell not unpleasantly on our ears, as we embarked late one evening for the realms of the Shah. There was a strong wind blowing, and the captain, who could speak German after the manner of a Finlander, said that if it continued, which he did not think likely, we could not be landed in Persia, which has no port or harbour on the Caspian. Anybody

may take a ticket entitling the bearer to travel by the boats of the Caucasus and Mercury Company (which is heavily subsidised by the Tsar's Government) from Baku to the Persian town of Enzelli, the usual landing place for Tehran; but if when the vessel arrives in the roadstead of Enzelli, the wind is blowing strongly from the north-north-east, there will be a surf rolling in which not all the power of Shah or Tsar can enable passengers to land. Who that has read the "Diary" of the Persian "Shadow of God" can forget the pathetic record of Imperial and Grand Vizierial sufferings when the *Constantine* rolled so fearfully off Enzelli that her yards nearly touched the waves, and the Shah, with the hand of apprehension placed on the stomach of discomposure, feared he would never again touch the soil of his own Persia!

The scenery in the south of the Caspian is magnificent. At Lenkoran—a famous place for tiger-hunting—the sea is bordered with high mountains. We see the last of Russian territory at Astara, where a narrow river of that name limits for the present the conquests of Russia from Persia. We had four immense hogsheads of petroleum on board for Astara, but our steam-vessel rolled so heavily that it was impossible to land them. They must be carried to Astrabad and back, more than five hundred miles, and possibly upon the return journey there would be the same difficulty, and the enormous tubs must then be

returned to Baku. On personal grounds, we were sorry not to be rid of this part of the cargo. The hogsheads were lashed to the funnel upon the main deck, and the Persian passengers used them frequently as a support for their kilians, from which the lighted charcoal rolled sometimes on to the deck. It seemed to me that we lived in momentary danger of an explosion which would have destroyed the vessel with all its passengers and cargo.

Possibly it was for a fair wind that the Persians were praying at sunset upon the last evening of our voyage. There was hardly a man of the score or so upon the after-deck who had not, either in a bag hung round his neck or hidden in the top of his tall brimless hat, a circular lump of sacred sun-baked clay, about the size of four half-crowns, taken from somewhere near the tomb of Houssein at Kerbela in Turkish Arabia. When the suppliant knelt in prayer, this was laid before him upon the deck, so that he could press his forehead upon the holy clay, and an elderly man who was not possessed of such precious fruit of that pilgrimage which ranks next in importance to a religious journey to Mecca, borrowed the treasure from one of the company, and performed his devotions, with his face towards Mecca, while the previous suppliant was engaged in preparing the sugary tea-water, the "chiē," which rich and poor in Persia seem to prefer to any other drink. Is it owing

to their vegetable diet that Eastern people appear so rarely to suffer from sea-sickness? Those who have endured such sufferings, for which the Caspian offers much opportunity, will have passed Astara, and approached the shore at Enzelli with gladness. If the sea is moderate, as it most fortunately was when we arrived, they will not be sorry even though there comes through the cabin windows a babel of screams and shouts, varied with the cracking of wood, as the surf-boats are dashed by the waves against each other and upon the side of the steam-ship. While the bundles of reeds tied upon the bulwarks of the frail craft are crunching together, with what skill the half-naked rowers avoid tumbling into the sea, or suffering injury to their hands and arms! "Pedder sec!" ("Son of a dog!") shrieked a melon-seller with nothing upon him except a skull-cap of many colours, a beard dyed bright red, and a tattered pair of blue cotton trousers. "Son of a dog!" he raved, as he saw his chance of early approach to the gangway diminished by the stealthy advance of an ingenious rival. To impute that a Persian's progenitor was canine, rouses still more indignation than is evoked even when the average Briton is told that he may trace his pedigree to an ape; to say "pedder sec!" to a son of Iran is as bad as calling a Frenchman "cochon," or a German "dummkopf." But the triumph of the melon-seller's enemy was momentary; a Russian sailor, leaning

over the bulwarks of the steamboat, snatched the skull-cap from the head of the ingenious intruder and flung it into the sea, exposing the shorn pathway from forehead to neck which is the mode of "hair-dressing" common throughout Persia.

In the terrific din caused by this exploit there rose from another boat a tall Persian of melancholy aspect, with dark dreamy eyes and handsome features, clad in a robe of sober green—a man with air and aspect very superior to that of the eight rowers before him. He had been looking long at us; he laid his hand twice on the front of his fur hat as he bowed in salutation, and then handed up a card, which I gladly saw was that of Mr. Henry A. Churchill (who won the C.B. for his share in the defence of Kars during the Crimean War, with Colonel Fenwick Williams and others), the British Consul at Resht. I had written to the Consul—ignorant that Mr. Churchill, whom I had met in Algiers during his residence there as Consul-General, held the office, and he had kindly sent this man (who accompanied us as chief servant to Tehran) to guide us to Resht. Seeing me read the card, on which Mr. Churchill had written a recommendation of "Houssein, the bearer," the melancholy Persian placed his head once more upon his hand to indicate that he was Houssein, and at a sign from me he ordered our baggage to be lowered to the boat.

The oars of our rowers reminded us of "the eight

of spades ;" they pulled with short, sharp digs in the water as we moved slowly to the place where the Lake of Enzelli pours the muddy waters of the Peribazaar (I have adopted throughout the ordinary English spelling of this word) river into the Caspian. In front of the wooden building which serves as a Custom House at this northern gate of Persia, there is no landing place ; some ragged, and more than half-naked, boys laid a plank from the bundle of reeds which formed the gunwale of our boat to the shore, and we landed, following Houssein into the only two-storeyed house in the place, the first floor of which was neatly spread with mats of grass. There were a few coloured tiles over the doorways, but the white-washed walls were as bare as the mud-cement of the exterior, and on the matting there was not an article of furniture.

We had fasted for many hours, and in that simple freemasonry of signs, familiar to all the world, I made known that on landing in Persia we wanted something to put in our mouths. Houssein had left us to attend to the baggage, and the bearded attendant seemed at once to understand and appreciate our wants. He hurried off, as I supposed, to bring some food, and soon reappeared with a blue-glazed pitcher of water. The pitcher was pretty in design and colouring, but water was not quite all that we needed. It was not till we arrived at Resht that we discovered

the full meaning of this watery provision ; the house which we had supposed to be a Persian hotel where we could call for anything—the kababs of the bazaars, the cakes of Noureddin Hassan, or the sweetmeats of the harems—was indeed a villa, a “konak,” belonging to the acting Sadr Azem, the Prime Minister of Persia, in which, by special favour, we were allowed to take shelter for half an hour from the sun, while a boat was being prepared to carry us twelve miles across the Lake of Enzelli. It was the first suggestion of that which is almost universal throughout Persia. The traveller will have no difficulty in finding a bare room in the towns. At a palace the servants in charge will cheerfully, if he looks likely to give them a present, put apartments at his disposal, and the floors may, perhaps, be covered with matting, but for all other requirements he must depend upon himself or his own attendants.

The white awning and cushions of our boat gave promise of comfort. The Shah's steam yacht, also white, was moored close at hand, and soon we had rowed past her to enter the shallow lagoon or lake which lies between Enzelli and Resht. A pensive, slender lad, with features of exquisite form, took his place behind us at the helm. His flowing robe of light stuff, resembling cashmere, appeared hardly suited for his occupation, but he had evidently a skilful knowledge of the currents and shallows of this

muddy lake, upon which the sun was glaring. The banks were hidden from us by tall reeds, their tops waving ten feet above the water, and rising behind this rustling fringe, we could see the highest trees of the rank, dense jungle, which is famous as the home of tigers and of the huge water-fowl, which screamed and fluttered among the reeds as we passed. It was very slow work getting across the lake with oars shaped like a baker's "peel," and three hours had passed before we reached the oozy banks of the Peribazaar river. Then the spades were shipped and a long rope, attached to the very top of the mast, was handed to the shore. The rowers landed, and disappeared among the reeds. On the muddy bank they harnessed themselves to the rope, which, descending to them from the mast, touched only the heads of the reeds as they moved swiftly along the river side. The scene was as purely natural as if we had been exploring some country never before trodden by the foot of man. The brown stream was not more than sixty feet wide. The current seemed to be silenced by the weight of mud suspended in the water; the air was still and oppressive between the high walls of reeds. Sometimes, where, for a few yards, there were no reeds, we could see the heads of our crew, who were pushing their way through the grass of the jungle; and now and then there was a buzz, or a loud rattle among the reeds, and a gorgeous pheasant, or a

wild turkey, or a long-legged stork sailed over our heads to the other side of the river. After being tugged in this way for an hour, we arrived at a landing place to which there was a stony footpath leading from a large house partly in ruins. By the river side there was a group of people, excited at the approach of our boat. This was Peri-bazaar, from whence we had to ride seven miles—is it not written in the Shah's Diary?—to Resht. We bought some of the only food to be obtained at Peri-bazaar, a few grapes, and about a foot square of the brown flabby bread of the country, in thickness and general appearance very like soaked leather. Our boxes were hoisted on to the backs of mules, and secured with cords of camels' hair neatly plaited; the melancholy Houssein then grandly waved us to a carriage which it appeared he had specially retained for our advantage.

We were told at Resht, that this was the one and only carriage in the whole province of Ghilan, recently imported from Russia by a Khan of high degree, who it seems was not above letting it out to Houssein for our use. It was, in fact, a superannuated Russian droschky of the meanest kind. We planted our feet with utmost firmness, and grasped the sides for safety as it moved off, uneasy as the waves of Enzelli. But for the dignity of the thing, as the Irishman said of the bottomless sedan-chair, one of

us would as soon have walked, but any exhibition of contempt might have been the death of the gloomy Houssein, so proud was he of this chariot. The admiration of the people of Peri-bazaar, who had probably not seen a wheeled conveyance since his Imperial Majesty the Shah rumbled that way in a carriage, was an insufficient consolation. As we rattled along, sometimes between rice-fields, from which the crop had been lately gathered, at others between thick groves, there was water always on both sides standing high in the ditches.

The province of Ghilan, of which Resht is the chief town, must be one of the most fertile areas in the world. From Enzelli to Peri-bazaar, and for miles beyond Resht, the country is a flat marsh, perennially manured with rank and rotting vegetation. Yet in places, the richly green lane through which we approached Resht resembled parts of Devonshire; the verdure was so bright, the climate so agreeable, we might almost have fancied it to be a day of early autumn in England, save that at every turn we met some Persian, long-robed in blue, or yellow, or russet-brown, sometimes perched between the humps of a sententious camel, sometimes upon the hinder extremity of a very good-looking donkey, a most awakening object to one who was dreaming of distant England. Wherever there was a hole, it was filled with stagnant water, which the sun lifted in unwholesome

vapours. The undrained approaches to Resht reeked with filth, and people were picking their way close by the walls of the houses and gardens, in order to avoid the abyss of muddy slush which awaited them in the centre. The day was hot, but our horses' hoofs were hidden in mud as we passed through the bazaar, in which there was hardly room for our miserable carriage amid the crowd which pressed to see the strangers.

The way was so narrow that any one of the stall-keepers, on either side, could have handed goods to us from his seat. But they themselves appeared far more attractive than their wares; than their gaudy horse-trappings of reddish leather, decorated with strips of carpets or pieces of bead-work and hung with red and yellow tassels of silk or wool and bells of silver or brass; their bowls of sour cream, their eggs (many of them coloured red, a common practice in Persia), pomegranates, Russian candles, figs, and cotton prints, some of the last from Manchester, of those special patterns which are never to be met with in the home markets. They all squat upon their heels, in a position peculiar to the Persians—a posture which no man could assume whose joints had not been trained to it from childhood. From the bazaar we drove across a large open space, resembling the “green” of many an English village. It was dotted with trees, and boys were playing in costumes which

made the sylvan scene, one extremely pretty and effective, appear to our eyes almost theatrical.

A few women are seen ; we met one sitting astride on horseback, as all Eastern women ride. We believe them to be women because of their costume and size ; but we can see no part of them, not even a hand or an eye. They are shrouded from the head to the knees in a cotton or silk sheet of dark blue or black ; the "chudder," it is called, which passes over the head and is held with the hands around and about the body. Over the "chudder" there is tied round the head a yard long veil of white cotton or linen, in which, before the eyes, is a piece of open work about the size of a finger, which is their only look-out and ventilator. The veil passes into the "chudder" at the chin. Every woman before going out of doors puts on a pair of loose trousers generally of the same stuff and colour as the "chudder," and thus her outdoor seclusion and disguise is complete. Her husband could not recognise her in the street. In this costume, Mahomedan women grope their way about the towns of Persia. Their trousers are tightly bound about the ankles above their coloured stockings, which are invariably of home manufacture ; and slippers, with no covering for the heel, complete the unsightly, unwholesome apparel of these uncomfortable victims of the Persian reading of the Koran.

In the East, the appearance of guests is, we may

say, never the first announcement of their arrival. From the "green" of Resht, Houssein galloped off at a wild pace, and we were soon very kindly welcomed by Mr. Churchill, whom, as I have said, I had met in Algiers, when he was Consul-General in that pleasant colony. He and Mrs. Churchill hospitably entertained us for a day while we were hurriedly preparing for our ride to Tehran. On the way to Persia, one learns, if ignorant before, that in travelling there one must be self-dependent for all but fruit and the plainest and coarsest of uncooked food ; yet with the experience of Europe, and even of Palestine and Egypt, where dragomans abound, and of Algeria, with its Arab-French caravanserais, a traveller is slow to believe that this can really be the fact. The roughness of Russian travel, especially the absence of bedding, prepares one for worse in Persia, and at Resht the whole truth becomes evident. It is well to be forewarned and forearmed. We were fortunate in meeting at any price with camp bedsteads and bedding of English make, and into the dirt of Resht-bazaar we plunged to obtain other necessaries for the journey to Tehran. The noise of wooden hammers upon metal pots led us to the department where we had to purchase a whole *batterie de cuisine*. Intended for use over what is known in England as a gipsy fire, none of the Persian pots are provided with handles. The Persian smiths seem to have no faith in solder ; per-

haps they do not know how to prepare it. And all Persian pots are of copper, so that after buying what Houssein thought requisite, we left the saucepans to be tinned upon the inside—an operation which in all Persian households is renewed at intervals of about three weeks. Houssein and the servants of the Consulate kept off a curious crowd, who appeared to be deeply interested in watching our selection of innumerable yards of cotton for sheets and other purposes. Later in the evening our servant brought in with an air of triumph a folding table, which bore the name, roughly carved upon its surface, of an English officer of Royal Engineers, who had been travelling the previous year in Persia, and to Houssein when we grew tired of shopping we left the purchase of candlesticks and glasses, saddle-bags and bridles, and the necessary stores of food.

There is but one mode of travelling in the interior of Persia. Even from Resht to the capital, on the most frequented road in all the Empire, no carriage can travel except with a sufficient number of men to lift it over places which are otherwise impassable. It was with the help of such bearers that the Shah was able to accompany his “carriage.” Yet perhaps it would be more correct to say that there are two modes. The traveller may buy horses and mules; the average cost will be about ten pounds sterling for each animal. He will then have to provide pack-saddles as well as

riding-saddles, and gholams or grooms, to feed and load his horses and mules ; or he may hire all the animals he requires from a muleteer or "charvodar." In the latter case the horses will not be so good-looking, but they will probably know the road, and be quite as safe in riding over rough paths which are sometimes dangerous. The charvodar and his gholams will be responsible for the stabling, feeding, and loading of the animals. The cost of a mule hired in this way, from Resht to Tehran, is about fifty krans, or two pounds English, for a ten days' march. It is usual to give the muleteers a present at the end of the journey if they have behaved well—a toman, about eight shillings each. One may travel "chapar" or "caravan ;" the latter being to the former as goods-train to express. In travelling "chapar," or, as the Anglo-Persians say, in "chaparing," saddle-horses are taken from one post-house or station ("menzil" is the Persian word), and galloped twelve, twenty, or sometimes five-and-twenty miles, to the next station. Those who travel with bedsteads and bedding and boxes, cannot travel "chapar." They, with their baggage mules, must form a caravan, and march from station to station at a rate of about three miles an hour, which is as fast as mules can walk. Those, in fact, are described as riding "caravan" who travel at the pace of loaded mules.

For men and women who suffer from being in the

saddle for so many hours, there is a choice between the "kerjava" and the "takht-i-rawan." The "kerjava" in its best appearance takes the form of two very small gipsy tents made of light bands of wood, the top bent circular, and covered with shawls or carpet. In each of these tents a man or woman sits after the "kerjavas" have been slung, like paniers, across the saddle of a strong mule. In the "kerjava" one must sit cross-legged, or with one's feet hanging out. The open side is sometimes turned to the tail of the mule, and the rider cannot see where the animal is going. The "kerjava" may be suspended over a precipice, on the edge of which the feet of the mule have but dangerous hold, or by sudden collision with another mule—and this often happens—one "kerjava" is thrown over the mule's back upon the other, and both fall heavily to the ground. Sometimes "kerjavas" have no roof, are simply strong paniers of wood, in which the riders (there must be two, or if one, then an equivalent weight will be required in the second "kerjava") are doubled up, their heads and feet only being visible, the body lost to sight in the "kerjava," amid a substratum of pillows and carpets. Although but one mule bears the burden, those who ride in "kerjavas" are very properly made to pay for two mules; and although two mules carry a "takht-i-rawan," those who employ this, the superior form of carriage, pay for four mules. The

“takht-i-rawan” is used by great ladies of the Shah’s Court, by the aged and infirm, and by the ladies of the Foreign Embassies. It is not a sedan-chair, because the bottom is usually quite flat, level with the shafts, and the occupant sits cross-legged, or lies down during the journey. But the shafts are like the four poles of a sedan-chair, and the two mules are harnessed in them—one between the two poles in front, the other, with its eyes close to the body of the carriage, between the two hinder poles. The “takht-i-rawan” is a carriage built of wood, and placed upon a strong framework, of which the two long poles, forming the four shafts, are the principal parts. The sides are generally panelled, in order to obtain strength without weight, and the roof of thin boards is covered with coarse cotton or canvas to keep out rain. There is usually a small square of glass in the side doors to give light when these are closed. One can rarely find a “takht-i-rawan” when such a carriage is wanted ; they are usually built to order, and cost from six to ten pounds sterling. We were in a hurry to leave Resht, and not disposed to wait while a “takht-i-rawan” was being built. We were anxious to escape to the mountains, away from the deadly atmosphere—the feverish swamp in which the British Consul at Resht is doomed to live.

On the second and last morning of our stay in Resht, we sat in Mr. Churchill’s room, the whole side

of which was open to the garden, transacting business with muleteers and sellers of articles of every description. We had little trouble in agreeing with the charvodar for horses and mules. He was a man about middle age, whose hair and moustache, naturally dark, were made the colour of a raven's wing with a dye compounded of indigo with khenna. Like all Persians, he was shaved across the poll, the side hair being led in a curl behind the ear. He wore a red turban, wound around a buff skull-cap; his legs were bare to the knee, and his socks and sandal shoes bore marks of much travel. A green tunic of cotton left but little of his loose drawers of blue visible, and over all he wore a long garment of pale yellow, lined with red cotton, and bound about his waist with a scarlet sash. He was anxious to get back to Tehran, a distance from Resht of two hundred miles, and fortunately the day was not an unlucky one for setting out. It is of no use whatever to engage with Persian muleteers for commencing a journey on a day which they consider unlucky. They may fear to displease or disobey openly; they may consent, but they will be certain to find some means of delay. Once off, all days are alike to the charvodar, except that day of the month Mohurrem on which the death of Houssein is celebrated.

There is another rule which the charvodar always desires to establish. On the first day of a march, it

takes a great deal of trouble and a strong will to get a caravan farther than two hours' ride, or eight miles from the town. Time is not a costly consideration in Persia, and as for space, the meanest and poorest possess that great boon. It is better always to avoid Mondays and Fridays in arranging for a march.

Fortunately the day we selected was Thursday, and there was no objection. We paid half the price of the hire of the horses and mules, and the charvodor departed to prepare for setting out in the afternoon. It is usual for consuls' wives and for people of such quality in the East to have the shops brought to them; they lose a good deal, both in pocket and in amusement, by not visiting the bazaars, and certainly they have a more limited choice of goods. Persuaded not to visit the bazaar a second time, we had in this way to give audience to the "butcher, the baker, the candlestickmaker," and to receive their slaves, loaded with goods, from which, assisted by Houssein, who, however, could not speak a word of any language but Persian, we made very satisfactory selections.

At last everything seemed ready, and the mules arrived, saddled, and festooned with ropes, to be loaded for the first time. It is a work of great moment. Everything must be nicely balanced; so much on one side, and about an equal weight on the other of the high, heavy pack-saddle, which the mule wears day and night, and which for weeks together is never

removed, except during the very few minutes when the rude process of grooming is performed at the end of a day's march. The charvodor, whose waist was now encircled, not only by a sash, but also with a thong of leather wound twice round his body, ending in about a foot of iron chain, eyed every box and package, and with skilful hands adjusted the loads. The iron chain dangling from his waist is the ordinary whip of the Persian muleteer. It was worn bright with handling and with cruel application to the legs of his animals. The gholams, who were to accompany us, were also provided with thongs and chains of the same sort. The charvodor was engrossed with two of our trunks, which were obviously unequal in weight. He laid an iron bedstead, folded in very small compass, upon the lighter one, bound each of the trunks in coarse cloth, then placed stout cords of plaited camels' hair across the saddle of a mule, and, summoning assistance, had the two packages lifted simultaneously, one on one side and one on the other of the saddle. This is done with many an "Ul-lāh"—an invocation without which muleteers rarely engage in any signal effort. "Now by the grace of God let's do our best," is contained in a liberal translation of "Ullah" when thus employed; and if there is a box to be lifted, or a fallen mule to be reset upon its legs, or when the tired animals are to be urged to a quicker walk, it is invariably with an "Ul-lāh" that the effort is called for.

When the second mule was loaded, we see it is intended that he should lead the caravan. He is covered with bells, which are always ringing, and they are not the "drowsy tinklings" which may "lull the distant fold;" those upon his head, and a score more suspended round his shoulders—all these might be said to "tinkle;" but suspended from the saddle this animal carried two bells almost big enough for a steeple, the clangour of which is terrific. I object, and urge, in English so emphatic as to be comprehended by any Persian, that bags of fodder, to say nothing of camp-stools, and carpets, and half a dozen saucepans are enough; but the charvodor will not leave the bells behind him. He assures me, with a pleasant smile, that "he," and "he," and "he," pointing to the other mules, like the bells, that, in fact, they won't go without this perpetual ding-dong. Houssein, who, in spite of his melancholy appearance, is strongly recommended as a very good cook and chief servant, now made his appearance in full travelling costume. He was girt with a short straight sword, and his long legs were encased in yellow leather. He loads his mule with saddle-bags, and upon these places a large cushion, made of his pillow and overcoats, then, in the true Persian fashion, he throws himself on the neck of the mule, and struggles to the high seat, from which his legs dangle in a way that seems pleasing to Persian riders of his

class. He had not forgotten brooms, which Mr. Churchill warned us were very requisite in travelling. It had been arranged that Houssein was to ride forward in advance of our arrival at a station, and look to the cleaning of our sleeping-place.

When at last we set out from Mr. Churchill's yard, our string of horses and mules carried beds and bedding, carpets, tables, folding seats, cooking utensils, and all the glass and crockery necessary for simple meals in a land where any provision beyond an empty room and a pillow of straw is absolutely unattainable, and where the comforts of such a service of dragomans and tents as may be had on the deserts of Syria and Egypt, have never been heard of. Twenty-four miles in a day of eight hours, or nine with an hour for rest in the middle of the march, is the ordinary caravan rate of travelling, and at this pace we passed out from the miserable town of Resht into the deliciously-green forest which, for about forty miles, lies between Resht and the barren ground, rising ruggedly towards the Elburz Mountains, which we must cross by the Pass of Kharzan, on the way to Tehran.

Near sunset, in a small opening in the forest, we approached a building with not a soul in it, which looked like a brick-built barn that had long been deserted and had fallen into ruin. At either extremity

there were the remains of a brick staircase, which led by steps that by ruin had become very difficult, to a loft or apartment opening upon a wooden platform. Our servants informed us that this was a station, that there was none other for many miles, and that in fact this was to be our resting-place for the night. Both apartments had walls and floor of clay. There were window frames, but they were broken and the glass had fallen out. One room was full of brambles, collected for firing by some former occupant, and in the other there were holes in the floor nearly large enough for a guest to fall through into the mule-shed beneath. Like the roof, the floor was of mud, dry, hard, and dusty, laid upon sticks and straw, which covered the rude cross-beams cut from the forest. It was more than half an hour's work to clear the better room of the brambles, to collect bricks from the ruins with which to stop the holes in the floor, to sweep the place thoroughly, to spread the floor with our Persian carpets, to fill the empty window frames with green boughs, and to set up our beds. A stream of water ran near, and a limitless supply of firewood was at hand, nor could any one be more skilful than Houssein in making a stove of bricks.

The crackling of our fire soon brought creatures around us, men and children in rags, who seemed to be drawn from the very ground by the smell of

mutton and chicken in the stew-pots. We sat on the wooden platform enjoying the first-fruits of the fire in a cup of tea ; the horses and mules were feeding in a patch of luxurious grass, and as the stillness increased at sunset, the forest seemed to grow into life with the noises of insects and animals. Our camp-kitchen upon the grass would have made an interesting picture. The grand form of Houssein stalked now and then before the flames. On one side stood an animated bundle of rags, who no doubt saw happy prospect of participation in the remains of the feast from the fact that he was permitted to hold the cover of a stew-pot while our major-domo stirred the contents with a wooden spoon. I shouted for the kettle which occupied a corner of the fire and other forms started up in willing service. Their joy was unbounded when we indulged a hopeful opinion that there would be pillau enough for everybody to have some. But the flies in their thousands insisted also upon their share when the savoury mess arrived on our platform.

Not "the worst inn's worst room" could present an appearance of abject poverty so striking as the mud walls, the broken roof and walls, and rough rafters of the room into which we retired for the night. But our beds were excellent. The air was sweet and the moonlight so bright that we could see all the rich colours of our Persian carpets upon the floor. There were no

locks or fastenings on the door. Afterwards we learned how rare it is to have a wooden door in a country where the craving for fuel is with many stronger than the respect for property. We barricaded the entrance with trunks and slept for some hours during the first night of our ride through Persia.





CHAPTER IX.

The month Ramadan—Mahammed's first wife—Ramadan in the Koran—The nocturnal kalian—Loading up—A Persian landlord—Persian money, Tomans, Krâns, and Shâhîces—Counting money—Persian mints—Rich provinces—Kudem—Chapar-khanah—Bala-khanah—Constructed to smoke—Caravanserais—Unfurnished apartments—Our bell mule—A travelled Khan—The Safid-Rud—Rustemabad—Village of Rhubar—Parchenar—Khan offers his tree—A night in the open—Mistaken for a thief—“The Bells!”—Camels in the Path.

IT is the month Ramfadan, the great Mahomedan fast. Our servants, as good Mussulmans, have to do all their eating and smoking between sunset and sunrise; and, unfortunately for our repose, they do much talking at the same inconvenient time. In every great town throughout Persia a cannon is fired in the evening and morning to signalise the moment when the fast ends and is to be resumed.

Mahomed ordained that the month Ramadan should be thus held sacred, because it was then that he first conceived his prophetic mission. He had lately risen in the world, as other leaders of men have done, by an advantageous match. Mahomed, at first the servant, the manager of her caravans, became the husband of the rich widow of Mecca, Khadijah, a

woman who appears throughout her life to have commanded his affection and respect. She was his elder in years, and Mahomed was forty when, in a cave beneath Mount Hara, he disclosed to Khadijah, with all the nervous energy of his temperament, his visions and, as he alleged, the promise of God that through his mouth should be poured out the laws of mankind. Khadijah was Mahomed's first convert. This occurred in Ramadan, and therefore it was written in the Koran that "in the month of Ramadan shall ye fast in which the Koran was sent down from Heaven." All lawful enjoyments, including eating and drinking, may be taken during the night, "until ye can plainly distinguish a white thread from a black thread by the daybreak; then keep the fast until night. These are the prescribed bounds of God."*

Sleeping in the wood near Resht I was awoke several times in the night by the ceaseless stream of talk going on beneath our resting-place; the intervals being audibly filled with the gurgling of the nargileh or hookah, the "kalian," as the Persians call their social pipe, which is the inevitable accompaniment of every long rest on the road, and of every hospitable reception or entertainment. Correctly speaking, this can only be called "nargileh" when the water-bowl is the shell of a cocoa-nut, for which I believe the Arabic

* Sale's "Al Koran," chap. ii.

word is “narghil.” The Persians smoke but little, and no man seems to regard a pipe as entirely his own. On a march, a great prince receives his jewelled kalian on horseback, and when the lips of his highness are satisfied, the tube passes to those of his followers and servants. Among the lowest classes of the people a reed pipe with an earthenware bowl is commonly used in travelling, and this passes in like manner from hand to hand. The smoke is always and at all times co-operative. To prepare the kalian, the tobacco is damped and placed in the pipe beneath a thick layer of live charcoal.

For my own part I prefer the smell of a wood fire such as that the odour of which easily found a way through the many holes in the walls and floor of our room, and awoke us with a pleasant sense that the sun would soon rise, and that a kettle was about to boil for the purposes of breakfast. In the morning air, which in these Persian lowlands was somewhat too dewy, an hour passed quickly while the horses and mules were being caught and loaded. Then from beside the ashes of our camp-fire arose a personage dressed in a long blue robe of ragged and dirty cotton, who appeared to claim the rights of a landlord over the remains of the ruined shed in which, thanks to our purchases at Resht and our other possessions, we had slept not uncomfortably. The landlords of Persian “chapar-khanahs,” or post-houses, do not present a

bill with a bow and a grimace in the European method; all their accounts are, the same with Mahomedans and with Christians, discharged verbally. This one, after the invariable manner of his kind in dealing with a European, lifted his joined hands to the sky and muttered something about "Allah" and the "Sahib." Then he presented both palms laid together, hollowed large enough to hold five hundred krans. The order of payment is of the "what you please" character; but whether you put five or ten silver pieces into those khenna-dyed hands, you will get no word of thanks; the Persian language has no equivalent for "thank you." Such an expression could only be conveyed in Persian by words glorifying the giver. But in any case the action will be the same; the "landlord" will stare at the coins, exhibit them to the bystanders, and extend his joined palms again to the giver for any addition.

The Persian money is not the least queer thing in the country. Everybody talks of "tomans," which are gold coins of the nominal value of ten krans. But the small remnant of this gold coinage is sold as a curiosity in the bazaars at twelve or thirteen krans for each gold toman. Virtually there are but three coins in the currency of Persia: the silver kran, the half kran, or penabat, and the shihee. The value of the kran, which is of pure unalloyed silver, is about equivalent to that of a franc. It is a small piece of

metal, intended to be circular, upon which the Shah's stamp may have fallen fully, or may have left but half an impression. Krans are often ragged at the edges, as pieces of dough would be if subjected to the same process, and every important town in Persia has a mint. The gold coinage has been exported to pay for imports of foreign manufactures ; and it seems that the silver is following the same course, and that Persia is being drained of the precious metals. It is a hard morning's work to count a hundred pounds sterling in the silver currency of Persia. The labour is generally shunned by employers, and trusty servants become skilled in the business. The method is always the same. The money-changer and the receiver sit upon the floor ; the changer throws down from his hand the krans by fives, and both payer and payee keep in mind the number of tomans by repeating it all the while in an audible mutter. Thus, while the first ten krans are being poured out, they say "yek (one) yek—yek—yek ;" then while the "ties" are mounting to twenty, they say, "du (two) du—du—du," and so on. It is very rarely that such a servant as Houssein makes an error in counting.

As to coining, that is carried on in all manner of ways. During our stay in Persia, the Shah had two Austrian officials, who were engaged, to the disgust of the Persians of the Court, in arranging for the issue of money. They had been a year in the country,

and were so successfully thwarted that nothing had been accomplished by these detested Europeans. A clever Khan, whose acquaintance we made in the capital, had a coining-machine sent from Paris at his own expense ; and with the aid of this he last year presented the Shah with some specimen coins, remarking at the same time upon the dilatoriness of the Austrians. The consequence was that he received orders to proceed with his manufacture ; and now new krans and penabats are occasionally to be seen. But base money is becoming more and more common, I am told, in Persia. People who affect to know, and who are certainly in a position to be well-informed, declare that most of the bad money comes from the Imperial mints ; and if, say, a master of a mint has a salary of a thousand tomans, and is able and willing, in order to retain his office, to give presents to the value of twenty thousand tomans—which I am assured is the case with at least one of these officers—the fact would, to say the least, throw much suspicion upon his issue.

There is a copper coinage, the shihee, of which twenty make a kran. But there are no shihees, there are only half shihees ; and it seems to be the abiding and unvarying conviction of Persian servants that this coinage, which is for the most part stamped with the well-known Persian combination of the Lion and Sun, is not sufficiently valuable for Europeans to

handle. The odd shihees in any purchase or any settlement of expenditure are never forthcoming ; the real value is much greater than the nominal worth, and perhaps Persian servants do not like to see the premium lost by unthrifty masters. Possibly this is the reason why they collect and sell them wholesale for their private advantage, at about twenty-five per cent. increase upon the nominal value of the coins.

No other part of Persia is so fertile as the wooded borders of the Caspian Sea, through which we passed from Enzelli to the Elburz Mountains. Every need of a large population might be supplied from this marvellously prolific soil ; the export of silk would provide foreign produce in abundance, and the malarious fevers, from which nearly every one suffers, would disappear if these low lands upon the coast were properly drained. The rivers are full of fish, including sturgeon and salmon. The fields would produce tea, tobacco, and rice, while the forests, swarming with game, supply food for myriads of silkworms. Silk is the chief article of commerce in this province of Ghilan, and both the quantity and value of the export are capable of great extension. But it is in harmony with all other things in Persia, to find in this a rapid and serious decline. Mr. Churchill, the British Consul at Resht, in an elaborate report upon the silk trade, addressed to Lord Derby, has shown that, within the brief space of seven years, the value of the

silk produced in the province of Ghilan has fallen from 700,000*l.* to 104,000*l.*

Through the green and winding path of the forest, which would seem interminable but for the glimpses of the grey mountains we catch from time to time, and which we know we have to cross, we approached Kudem, the end of our second day's march. When we alighted in the doorway of the "chapar-khanah," one of the best post-houses in Persia, in front of the brick stairs leading to the "bala-khanah," the raised apartment we were to occupy, we insisted upon having the heavy pack-saddles removed from off the backs of our mules, an order which was regarded by the charvodor as the silly whim of ignorant eccentrics. Perhaps, as like other Eastern peoples, Persians do not lay aside their own clothes at night, they suppose their mules prefer to carry a high and heavy structure composed of wood, straw, carpet, and leather, on their backs through all the hours of repose. Our mules seemed to express their own opinion by enjoying a prolonged roll on the grass. For our own refreshment, the invariable chicken was soon boiling in one of our travelling stew-pots. I should have looked forward to the result with greater pleasure if I had not seen the chicken running about an hour before it was reduced to this condition. Our apartment, though not very clean, was large, and had a boarded floor. It was placed over the archway leading to the

stable-yard, and the question of ventilation was easily settled by the existence of a large hole in the floor, which, after the manner of icemen in the Parks, we thought it desirable to mark with a flag of white paper as decidedly "dangerous."

The chapar-khanah of Kudem is, I think, the best in Persia, but in outward form it resembles the usual construction. The chapar-khanah is always enclosed with a wall built of mud-bricks, brown, sun-baked, and friable, plastered over with a coarse cement of mud mixed with broken straw. The entrance archway is secured by a strong gate. In the centre is a quadrangular yard for horses and mules, and round three sides are flat-roofed sheds, one side of which is formed by the outer wall. The sheds are for the animals and their drivers, who all sleep together in the winter months. On the fourth side, near the gate, there are generally two or three windowless and doorless sheds, plastered inside with mud, having a hole in one corner for a fireplace, which invariably smokes. But, perhaps, the more common arrangement is for these places to have a hole somewhere in the roof, and then the fire can be lighted on any part of the floor. In this way, the smoke is blinding, but if a Persian has not his eyes and mouth full of smoke, he seems not to think he is getting fully the worth of his firewood, which is always costly. A smoky chimney appears to be not at all unpopular in a country where no

necessary of life is so dear as fuel. These two or three holes or hovels are used by native travellers, and it was in one of these places that our servants prepared our food. We very rarely met with a chapar-khanah which had not a bala-khanah. The latter word would seem to have some philological connexion with "balcony," because it is used to denote any apartment above the ground floor, and the most distinctive feature of a Persian apartment thus elevated, is the platform which the occupant enjoys upon the flat roof of the lower buildings. Inside the quadrangle, near the doorway, there are as a rule two ways to the bala-khanah; high steps in the stable wall, by which one climbs to the roof and the level of the bala-khanah. This single room, the sole erection above the flat roof of the parallelogram-shaped stables, is generally about eight feet square, built, like all the rest, of mud-bricks and covered with mud-cement. The rafters of the roof are usually festooned with cobwebs, the walls are grimy with issues from the fireplace, which is rudely constructed to smoke. Indeed, we often found the flue purposely stopped with clay and stones, which had been placed there by thrifty Persians who, having lighted a fire of wood on a winter's evening, had stopped the chimney in their desire for economy of heat. As a rule, there are two or three doorways without doors, and sometimes a hole or two intended for

windows. If the wood-fire smokes, one is glad to have no door until the charred wood is flung outside, and the pure wind of evening has blown the pungent odour from the place.

Upon the high table land extending from Tehran beyond Shiraz, the nights are intensely cold from December to April, and a fire is necessary in these vile lodgings. When, as is the rule, there is no door, the traveller nails up a horse-cloth, a "nummud" as the Persians call their serviceable felts of pressed camels' hair, or, better still, the canvas door of a military tent; and when the same work has been performed at the other doors, and about the holes which serve as windows, and the breeze, to which the bala-khanah is pre-eminently exposed, is thus partially blocked out, the thermometer may possibly, in the warmest hours of a January night, creep as high as zero. In the summer and autumn, in such heat as that in which we rode from Resht to Tehran, there are worse discomforts than a freezing temperature. The bala-khanah, which in winter is free from vermin, then swarms with the most troublesome insects.

In the caravanserais, of which there is generally one near to every chapar-khanah, the traveller has no trouble whatever about windows, because there are none. Around the large horse-yard there are a number of dark arches, opening upon a brick terrace, raised about three feet above the yard. Generally, the

arches have a circular hole in the roof for the outlet of the smoke ; but sometimes there is a flue. The end of the arch next the yard is filled with rough masonry, a square doorway being left, in which, if one wishes for privacy—or in winter, for greater warmth than that of a north wind careering over miles of snow—there must be nailed some covering from the traveller's baggage. But whether in chapar-khanah or caravanserai, his baggage must include everything, and for security all must be placed with him, or his servants, in their respective arches of the caravanserai ; upon the dusty floor of the bala-khanah or in one of the mud caverns near the gate, which may during the previous night have been used as a stable for mules. Every morning and evening an hour is spent in packing and unpacking, in loading and unloading. On arriving the apartment is bare, littered with the rubbish of the last occupier, and on going out there is little danger of forgetting any part of one's baggage. It is only necessary to see that the place is stripped of everything ; that nothing useful remains behind ; there will be no risk of taking aught that does not belong to the traveller.

We left Kudem in the morning when the grass was wet with dew, and the unrisen sun showed the outline of the mountains in a clear, grey light. When the forest was at its stillest hour, our little caravan moved on towards Rustemabad ; but not noiselessly.

In spite of our protests, the first horse carried a whole peal of bells ; bells on his neck and bells on his hind quarters, bells which I had heard tinkling in some distant pasture during the night, and that rang in our ears all the day long. These were gentle in their tones compared with the two "Big Bens," each nine inches high and four wide at the mouth, which I had argued against at Resht to no purpose, and which were still carried by one of our baggage mules. At times we urged our horses onward to escape from the sonorous stroke of these dreadful bells ; but Tydides, as we named the bell-mule, was ever "rushing to the war." His step was fast, and the projecting trunks with which he was loaded were terrible when he charged upon us. Subject to his load he was to a great extent the master of his own actions ; the course was completely open to him. At about two feet distant from each of his sides the sharp iron-bound angle of a wooden trunk projected. An ancient Briton with scythes attached to the wheels of his chariot could hardly have been a more dreadful neighbour. Whenever the clang of his bells was heard close behind, we looked to our legs with fond solicitude, and hurried away. Tydides was utterly careless of the wounds he inflicted upon us with our own trunks for his weapons of war.

In travelling "caravan," that is, at walking pace, in the long hours of the day's journey, and especially

in the presence of beautiful scenery, one often becomes listless and inattentive—an attitude which certainly will bring into painful operation the two dangerous proclivities of caravan mules and horses. If the road is enclosed, these animals will probably turn every corner with an eye to saving distance, rather than of regard for the full space required for the rider's legs; and when the path is on one side precipitous, if his legs are not forced against the rocky side of the path, he will be taken to the extreme outside edge, on which a stumble or a tiny landslip would probably prove fatal. When we emerged from the forest, our path began to be of the latter sort—a track made with no regard for level, but simply up and down the stony ledges, over the spurs of hills which had been broken by the course of the yellow river, the Safid-Rud, the windings of which we had now to follow for about fifty miles.

We were riding in the outskirts of the forest when a Persian, whose dress and saddle cloth proclaimed him to be a man of rank, overtook us. He wore the usual high black hat, with a peak strapped round it, upon the side from which the rays of the morning sun were already hot, a coat of light cotton, the skirt thickly gathered at the waist; very loose trousers of black satin, and high riding boots rising above the knee. He had evidently learnt all that was to be

known about us at Kudem, and surprised me with "Good morning, sare." He was a handsome man, but there was something artificial in his face. The ambition in Persia to have a black or red beard is over-mastering. For the former colour, the Persians mix indigo with khenna, and it was with this mixture that his hair and beard were dyed a blue black. Years ago, he said, he had been attached to the Persian Legation in London, and even now he told us he liked to be "very Englishman." The ideas of the Khan (I will not further identify him) on the subject of baggage appeared to be enviably simple. His servant carried saddle bags which contained a brass samovar (the Russian kettle) a couple of small carpets, a well-stuffed pillow, two or three coats, and a few pomegranates. He was travelling "chapar," posting, upon his own horse, and could proceed at trot or gallop. I had reason to know all this in the course of a twelve days' journey, in which the Khan kindly insisted on keeping company with our caravan, partly, as he said, because in Persia nobody travels alone if he can help it; partly, I think, because he wished to be well spoken of to the English Minister and the Persian Government in Tehran by an Englishman, and not a little from a kindly, genuine desire to be of service to us.

The exquisite scenery through which we were passing seemed to give him no special pleasure. The

sun had risen gloriously above the mountain peaks varying in height from ten to fifteen thousand feet. The bare sides of the Elburz chain showed almost every known tint of colour. The bright reds and greens of these mountains can mean nothing less than that they are metalliferous to enormous richness. The yellow stream of the Safid-Rud, stretching sometimes over a bed a quarter of a mile in width, ran between the mountains and our path, which was for miles overhung with trees. In the woody hollows, we sometimes forded rushing streams which covered the knees of our mules, then mounted a hill, to dip again into the next watery hollow, where beside the stream grass grew deliciously green, and our active muleteers, careful in nothing so much as to keep their feet moderately dry, walked, surefooted as goats, across a prostrate tree which in every difficult case formed the only bridge.

The sun was intensely hot when we reached Rustemabad, at two o'clock, having passed through a mud-built village which lent its name to the station. The buildings of the village were of the simplest order ; the material, the river mud mixed with chopped straw ; the flat roofs of the same material laid upon what in England we should call bavin wood, which rested on rafters placed upon the mud walls. A round hole here and there in the mud roof served for a chimney. The huts were so close together that there was not left a roadway of more than three yards in the

bazaar, where grapes, pomegranates, melons, green figs, fowls, and ropes of camels' hair were exposed for sale.

As usual, a servant had gone forward to prepare and furnish the room which we were to occupy, but the nature of the floor defied the efforts of any broom to remove the dust. The apartment had six windows and three doors. In the former, half the glass was gone, and the doors had never seen a lock. In fact, locks are not used in Persia. The Persians have not as yet advanced further than bolts and padlocks of the rudest manufacture.

We had just succeeded in getting our beds set up, our carpets spread, and tea made, when we received a visit of ceremony from the Khan, who was immensely amused at my elaborately made bed, with sheets and counterpane in the good English fashion, and on my returning his visit, contrasted his simple carpet and pillow with my complicated arrangements. He had courteously given up to us the only room which had doors. In his resting-place, there had been windows, but there were now only the wide openings. However the samovar was boiling, and we had a glass of tea in the Persian manner, that is, very weak, without milk, and with an almost sickening quantity of sugar. Next morning, on resuming our journey, we passed through groves of olives, quite unfenced, the trees growing in rich and well-watered oases by the river's side,

through the mud village of Rhudbar, wealthy in splendid fruits. We bought a delicious melon for the value of twopence English, and grapes more luscious than those of Italy or Spain for less than a halfpenny a pound. Near the end of the day's march we crossed the river by a bridge and arrived at Manjil, another mud-built village. We had risen above the level of universal richness which belongs only to the provinces of Persia which border the Caspian Sea. Now our road lay through an arid country which was only green near the river or where artificial irrigation made an oasis.

We left Manjil on the 18th October, about daylight, and at nine o'clock forded the river three times, which was high enough to be quite inconvenient ; and as we approached Parchenar, the resting-place for the night, we anticipated bad things of that station, on seeing that there was nothing above the ground-floor level of the buildings. The enclosure was, as usual, occupied by mules, and littered with dirty straw. A tall old Persian, dressed in the blue cotton robe and trousers common to the peasantry and working classes of the country, showed us a hole in the wall, leading, upon the same level as the yard, into what was a stable or a dwelling room, but what in another position every one would call a dungeon : a stone-built room, with no window of any sort, dark but for a fire of wood which was burning unconfined on the

centre of the floor—a room of which the natural illumination came only from a small hole in the roof, through which some of the smoke was finding exit, and the doorway, which was as open to the mules or dogs in the yard as to ourselves. After mature deliberation we preferred to encamp in the open air.

At the gate of this wretched chapar-khanah we met the Khan, who pointed to a solitary tree, in the shade of which he had already spread his carpets. He offered us his “tree” with ceremonious courtesy, if we preferred to pass the night beneath its branches ; but we chose a place under the wall of the post-house, from which we could see across the valley. We sent Ali, a lanky lad whom we had engaged upon the road, to the river to cut some of the tall green rushes, with which we strewed the ground before we laid down our carpets. The melancholy Houssein built a fire-place of stones from a ruined wall with all the skill of a Count Rumford ; we had dined before the light of day departed, and presently our servants appeared, bringing every article of our baggage, which they placed upon our encampment. In vain I tried to make them understand that these things would be safer with them inside the walls ; they protested, for a reason I have never yet discovered, that the baggage would be more secure at our side.

We were soon left alone with the starry night, one

lying in a well-made bed, and one rolled in a rug on the carpets. There were three fires burning in the valley, two marking the resting-place of long strings of camels laden with goods for Tehran, and the third that of our muleteers, one of whom disturbed our first attempt to sleep with a caution against wandering thieves. This made us regard with increased suspicion the motions of two men, who half an hour afterwards glided noiselessly, as all Persians walk, round the wall of the chapar-khanah, and stood talking together near to our solitary resting-place.

The night was beautiful; not a cloud nor the slightest mist obscured the stars, or concealed any part of the hard, jagged outline of the mountains, from behind which the moon, a little less than full, rose about nine o'clock, throwing a flood of silvery light upon the two men, whose position, one on each side of us, about thirty yards distant, gave us uneasiness, and prevented sleep. At last they lay down upon the ground, intending, as it seemed very possible, to wait until we fell asleep before they approached our baggage. We agreed to watch these disquieting visitors in spells of two hours each; but I had scarcely entered upon the second watch at half an hour after midnight, when our chief servant appeared, and suggested that as the next day's journey included the very severe work of crossing the Elburz Mountains by the Kharzan Pass, it would be well for the

horses and ourselves if we were willing to start at once, so as to get to the top before sunrise. We were soon in our saddles, when it turned out that one of the suspected thieves, who lay like a log near us, was none other than the landlord of the miserable place in which we had refused to lodge. He had come out to guard us during the night, and had we but known who he was we need not have been sleepless.

“The bells!” I said, with something of the horror which Mr. Irving expresses in his painful representation of Mathias, when I heard the too well-known clangour of our baggage mule. It was weird work, fording the river, and pushing our way through the tall rushes of the valley, in the morning moonlight; but when we saw the terrible steeps up which the mules and horses had to climb, we were very glad we had not slept till sunrise. For hours we mounted, until we had gained an elevation of about seven thousand feet. The air was keen and cold; the stony path narrow, and in places dangerous. Just at the worst part of the ascent, an hour before daybreak, we heard the sound of other bells, and in the moonlight saw the first of a long line of loaded camels, coming down the pass. There were in all nearly a hundred, divided into strings of about twenty, fastened to a rope, which passed from the nose of one to the nose of another. To have met the camels in the narrow path would be perilous, and we stood aside, on the widest

ledge at hand, to let them pass. But they moved very slowly, and meanwhile mules, horses, and camels *en route* for Tehran collected behind us, and some of the more unruly mules forced their loads among us, making great confusion. Such moments would be unbearable if one thought of nothing but the possible danger of the position. But there is so much kicking and cuffing, and active work of self-protection to be done, one's legs are so exposed to injury, and form such an engrossing embarrassment, that one has no time to think of the precipice, and of the death which a sudden push from a stumbling mule or camel might, or rather must, cause.





CHAPTER X.

How hills are made—Kharzan—Mazara—A Persian village—John Milton and Casbeen—The Plain of Kasveen—The Mirage—Gardens of Kasveen—Dervishes—Decay of Kasveen—A Persian town—Women of Kasveen—Persian costumes—“Allahu Akbar”—Mosque of Kasveen—Telegram from Tehran—Visit to the Khan—His love affairs—Lost in Kasveen—Abdulabad—An alarm and an arrival—“Gosrozink”—Native ploughs—On to Karij—Lodged in the Shah’s Palace—The Imperial Saloon—An Imperial bedroom—Approach to Tehran—Population of the capital—The Kasveen Gate—Mud houses and walls—The Imperial Theatre—Entrance to the “Arg”—Neglect of Public Works—British Legation—Mirza Houssein Khan—Tehran Bazaar—Caravanserai Ameer.

THEY say in the Herzegovina that when the Creator had made the world he passed over it strewing the smooth surface with mountains and hills, but that over that country he let fall a great part of his burden. In this way they account for its peculiarly unlevel surface. And as the rising sun glowed upon the summits of the lower mountains of the Elburz chain, upon which we looked down shortly after our encounter with the camels, the whole land seemed to be covered with hill-tops. The Khan had ridden on to Kharzan to a caravanserai near the end of the pass, and was standing in the doorway when we rode up, shivering with cold. He pointed cheer-

fully to his servant, one Syed Ali, who was blowing the charcoal in his master's samovar to a white heat. Our servants were provided with cold fowl, boiled eggs, bread and grapes, and wine. We had a pleasant bivouac in this mountain station, and soon forgot the sleepless night at Parchenar. Two hours afterwards we had descended about fifteen hundred feet, and arrived at the village of Mazara. The post-house, like the village, was built of mud. We mounted by a ladder with rungs terribly wide apart on to the flat roof of the ground floor, and there found a little room with two wooden doors, which also served as windows. Inside, there lay our bright carpets, and upon them a tray covered with pomegranates, a present from the Khan, which we acknowledged with the gift of a melon. The sun was intensely hot, and the advantages of mud construction in point of coolness were very perceptible. We all slept through the middle hours of the day, and towards evening, when I came out upon the roof, activity had been resumed. I had to avoid stepping down the chimnies, which, however, were smoking mindfully and pungently. Below in the yard there were dancers keeping slow time to a monotonous tom-tom. I fancy they had an eye to the remains of our dinner, which they afterwards enjoyed. The neighbouring roofs were for the most part covered with a layer of horse and cow dung, spread out to dry. When dried it is mixed with

clay, and forms the fuel of the village. On some roofs the manufacture of desiccated dung and clay was in process of drying. Close by the village a piece of ground had been trodden hard by use as a threshing-floor. There were two small bullocks and two large men at work in this way. The beasts were dragging round and round, over the broken straw, a wooden sledge, in which were set two circular harrows, also of wood, which revolved simply by being drawn over the straw. They had trodden and dragged until none of the straw was more than two inches in length. The oxen and the men were knee deep in it, and beneath the broken straw lay the golden grain. The tilled land surrounding the village looked but a patch upon the vast plain stretched out before us. The cultivated soil was naturally no better than much of that which was waste, but it was watered, and irrigation brings forth rich crops of corn and fruit.

Mazara, lying under the Elburz Mountains upon the edge of a sharp slope, is a fair specimen of a Persian village. The earth is brown, the houses are brown and crumbling into the dust of the plain, from the mud of which they have been made. If human beings were wont to burrow in the earth, their habitations would, I suppose, look from a distance very much like the mud-built villages of Persia. There is no street; no order in the arrangement of the huts; no provision whatever for drainage. The houses are

set together anyhow; sometimes with space enough between for a loaded mule to pass, but rarely more, though the plain is so vast and barren. The miserable kennel of dried mud in which we rested was the only elevation, and its raised position was the cause of one of us having a fall which might have had a very serious result. The roof outside our sleeping-place was very infirm, and my shadow concealed a hole jagged with broken sticks which lay beneath the clay. In the early morning, when we were preparing to start, my wife stepped through this hole, and to a considerable extent disappeared. It was most fortunate that she was not badly hurt.

Our path lay directly to Kasveen, or Casbeen, formerly one of the chief towns of Persia, a city which was famous in Milton's day, for the author of "Paradise Lost" wrote—

Or Bactrian Sophi from the horns
Of Turkish crescent, leaves all waste beyond
The realm of Aladule, in his retreat
To Tauris or Casbeen.

We rode to Casbeen, or Kasveen, over the nearly flat plain which stretches far beyond Tehran, and of which the average level is nearly four thousand feet above the sea. It is enclosed by mountains and hills, and in some places is not more than fifteen or twenty miles wide. From Mazara to Kasveen the unbroken soil appears to be naturally fertile, but it is waste for

want of water, which might so easily be stored in the hills. Where water is artificially provided the method is very curious. From a spring found by digging upon raised ground, a tunnel is made until the surface is reached, the course of the tunnel being marked by shafts ("k'nats" these holes are called), the openings of which upon the plain are embanked with the earth removed by the excavation.

The illusion of the mirage, which is nowhere more often seen than in Persia, is well known. The mist of the morning hovering upon the plain, assumes the appearance of water. Near Kasveen, the mirage was very remarkable. The cattle in the distance seemed to be drinking upon the edge of still waters, and the posts of the Indo-European Telegraph to be standing in a shallow lagoon. The deception is as "old as the hills." It has been observed in all ages. In one of the odes of Hafiz, the great poet of Persia, who has been dead nearly five hundred years, has said of this natural illusion—

The fountain head is far off in the desolate wilderness;
Beware, lest the demon deceive thee with the mirage.

For hours we seemed to be riding towards water which we knew did not exist. The mirage floated deceptively before us, and when at last it cleared off, there was another illusion. The trees in the gardens of Kasveen, which were yet a dozen miles distant, seemed to be scarcely more than three or four miles from us.

At last we reached these gardens, which are for the most part vineyards, and in the way of eating there can be few greater pleasures than to devour the grapes of Kasveen on a hot day as one would currants in England. They are the small stoneless grapes which when dried are sold as "sultana" raisins. But Kasveen is a half-ruined, famine-stricken dust-heap. During the famine of 1870-71 the poor of Kasveen died by hundreds. As we rode through the bazaar on our way to the post-house, we saw what it might cost to have a blind horse in Persia. Every now and then there was a deep square hole open and unguarded in the centre of the street, for cleansing the water-course which runs beneath. Near the entrance to the mud-built chapar-khanah, there were two dervishes grovelling in the dust and screaming for alms. One, a strongly-built man, nearly naked, was hoarse and half stupefied with his shouts, which, though few regarded, none mocked or laughed at. The other, an old man, was more methodical. In a fanatical burst he now and then threw out "Ali! Ali!" nothing more being needed, especially in Ramadan, to show his devotion to Ali, the great son-in-law of Mahomed. The dervishes of Persia are a privileged institution. They are not a caste, for I believe any one is free to take up the profession of religious mendicancy to which they seem devoted. The madder their actions, the more respect they

appear to gain. Nobody "chaffs" a dervish, and in none do his eccentricities provoke ridicule.

When after passing through many bye-paths and crooked ways we reached the chapar-khanah, our mules rushed to the mangers and we mounted the roof of the stables, by steps of which some were nearly two feet high, to the bala-khanah. Kasveen is still regarded as a town of much importance, where a traveller might expect to find accommodation for man and beast, yet our servants had to build a stove of bricks on the roof for cooking our dinner, which consisted of chicken broth followed by the stewed chicken with rice and sweetmeats. Kasveen suffered horribly in the recent famine, and this may account for some of the ruin which surrounded us. But the decay of Kasveen is of long-standing, and will not apparently be arrested by the absence of famine. There are miles and miles of ruined mud walls in and about the town. At all times and under any circumstances a Persian town has a desolate appearance. Even in a town as large as Kasveen, with twenty or thirty thousand inhabitants, there are not a dozen houses with a second storey, and not a single private house with a window opening upon the street. In Turkey, the windows of the harem, the women's part of the house, are it is true jealously latticed, and the lattice has sometimes a pretty appearance from the street; but one cannot see an inch into the

“anderoon” or harem of a Persian house. The streets, except in the bazaars, are bounded by mud walls with no opening or variation except the door, which is very rarely unfastened.

We were standing on the roof of the chapar-khanah, looking down into the dusty street, when a number of women returning from a mosque passed beneath, chattering and laughing. They lifted their heads to look at us but not an eye was visible, and though they were probably only neighbours and certainly belonged to different houses and families, there was as precise similarity in their colouring—the indigo chudder and trousers and the white veil—as if they had worn the uniform of one regiment. The indoor costume of Persian women of the higher class appears indelicate to Europeans. The chudder and trousers are the invariable walking costume. Indoors the dress of a Persian lady is more like that of a ballet-girl, except that the Persian lady’s legs are not covered, and that her bodice makes even less pretension to be a covering than that of a danseuse of these *décolletées* days. In the anderoons of Persian royalty, my wife was received by princesses thus attired, or rather unattired, the high fashion being for the short skirts to stand out in the most approved manner of the ballet.

I have often thought it would make the canal scenes of Venice far more beautiful if the gondolas

were not so invariably painted with sombre black, a survival I believe of the stern equality of the Republican epoch. And to see the Persian women stumbling slipshod or riding over the miserable roads, all disguised in the same dismal covering—a dress far more ugly than was ever worn by nun or Sister of Mercy—is to pity the wearers of a costume which custom and the rule of the Koran have made acceptable. In Turkey again the women are veiled, but their dress is of many colours; in Persia, no part of their person, not an eye, is visible, and their outdoor costume has this painful and sombre uniformity.

At sunset, as usual, the voices of the moollahs chanting the "Allahu Akbar" (God is great) sounded from all quarters of the town of Kasveen; highest of all from a little building something like a Swiss châlet placed over the archway of the courtyard of the principal mosque. Ignorant of the fact that Europeans never visit the Persian mosques, and with no knowledge of the great danger of the excursion, we set out to see this royal mosque, the only interesting building in Kasveen. We passed through a part of the bazaar, where, as in all towns in Persia, men may be seen ginning cotton with a bow, ignorant of European inventions, and where others were laboriously embossing writing paper by rubbing the rough sheet with polished wood. Our visit to the mosque attracted much attention, but we met with

no opposition. We were followed by a crowd, but that was not unusual, and no one made any remonstrance. The building has no architectural merit, and is curious only for the pleasing effect produced with glazed bricks of different colours. Like most of the Persian mosques, this praying place is entirely open. The high pointed arch of the centre, beneath which is the chief or grand pavilion, has a beading of bright blue. There are panels set with highly glazed tiles; the ground of primrose yellow, on which there are flowers in red and blue. The effect is very pleasing and might be much more so with better workmanship and a finer style of construction.

At Kasveen, there is a station of the Indo-European Telegraph Company ; and on our return to the post-house we found the local inspector, an Italian, with a telegram in his hand—an invitation to us from the English Minister in Tehran, to make the Legation our home during our stay in the capital.

I had forwarded to Mr. Thomson a letter of introduction, of which this telegram contained an acknowledgment. We should gladly have accepted the Minister's very kind offer of hospitality had we remained under the impression, which we had on leaving England, that it was a matter of necessity ; that there was no other place in which we could find suitable lodging. But we had learnt at Baku, from Count Thun, the brother-in-law of the Austrian

Envoy, and at Resht from Mr. Churchill, that there was an hotel in Tehran, kept by a Frenchman who had been “chef” to the Shah; and hearing this, we did not feel disposed to intrude upon the British Minister. We at once telegraphed our thanks to Mr. Thomson from Kasveen, and expressed our intention of staying at M. Prevôt’s hotel.

The Khan, our faithful travelling companion, had taken up his quarters at the caravanserai, where I found him lodged after the manner of his country. About the entrance, on the brick ledges of the wide gateway, muleteers lay sleeping in every imaginable posture, and inside, the same might be said of their mules, among which I recognised our own animals. Surrounding this yard was the usual brick parapet, about four feet high, and as many broad, by which the human inhabitants of the caravanserai reached their apartments, which were simply deep niches, closed on the outside with panelled wood, in which there was a door, and a sliding shutter for a window. The Khan, with his shutter raised and his door open, sat cross-legged on his travelling carpet at the mouth of his arch, of which both floor and ceiling were of plain unconcealed brickwork. It was very curious to see a man whose manners evinced in some respects great refinement, lodged with apparently perfect contentment in a dark arch looking upon a stable yard. Beside him lay three or four melons, and far in the

background two live fowls, with their legs tied together—this was his larder.

The ritual or etiquette which regulates in Persia the making, and the exchange, and the duration of visits, as well as of presents, is very severe. The anxiety of the Khan that I should pay him a visit in the caravanserai was quite touching. He was evidently fearful that his reputation would suffer in the eyes of the Kasveen people, if, after we had travelled together to the town, and had been accompanied by him to the chapar-khanah, I allowed the day of arrival to pass without making personal inquiries concerning his health and comfort. And I was glad to please him in so small a matter, for he had been untiring in his attentions to us upon the road. While I sat with the Khan upon his carpet, in the Kasveen caravanserai, he told me that he had a princess for a wife in Tehran. He had once, he said, hoped to have been married to an Englishwoman. At the Legation in London there was, he went on to tell me, a servant girl, "Emily," whom he wished to marry. She was "very beauty," "very beauty," and he confessed to having made her an offer; but it appeared from the sequel of this story of unrequited affection, that "Emily," on learning that in Persia men had more than one wife, and that women never walked in the streets with their faces exposed to view, would not listen to the Khan's proposals.

The great Mahomedan fast is not the best time for travelling; servants and muleteers can obtain priestly permission to eat while upon the journey, but not a few of them are fanatics, and prefer to keep the fast. The consequence is that they are ill-tempered and languid all day, ravenous towards evening; and the traveller may as well whistle to the wind as endeavour to obtain their attention at the moment when, at sunset, feeding is lawful. Till sunrise their licence is unchecked; they eat, drink, smoke, and finally are found asleep when their employer wishes to be on the road. It was so in the morning upon which we quitted Kasveen, and leaving the baggage to be packed by the sleepy gholams and servants, we set off quite alone two hours before sunrise, thinking that the high path to Tehran would be perfectly clear. But we were soon lost among the ruins of Kasveen, with no living thing at hand except one or two howling dogs, which stalked mournfully over the ruined mud-walls and broken archways of the decayed and decaying town. Soon, however, the rising sun revealed the posts of the Tehran telegraph, and these led us to the road, where in a short time we heard the jingling bells of our baggage train. We met with no shade whatever during the whole day's ride until we arrived at the solitary post-house of Abdulabad; and we had not been there an hour before one of our servants rushed

into the room exclaiming, “Inglees Sahib! Tehran!” He was quickly followed by an Englishman, who reminded me at once of the photograph of Mr. H. M. Stanley. And this was no wonder; he was like Mr. Stanley in face; the same bold, active expression; and his dress was identical, pith helmet, short tunic, leather belt, garnished with pistol and pouch; and high riding-boots. His “Mr. Arnold, I believe?” was not needed to suggest the resemblance. He had brought a letter from the British Minister at Tehran, repeating in writing the very kind invitation which we had received the day before by telegraph at Kasveen, and cautioning us to avoid exposure to the sun, which “even at this time of year,” Mr. Thomson wrote, “is dangerous.”

We left Abdulabad three hours before daybreak, in order to finish our journey before the great heat of the afternoon. There was no moon; it was cold and very dark. Ali was acting as guide, with his hand upon the bridle of my wife’s horse, which at every brook or watercourse he abandoned, leaving the rider to splash into unknown darkness and depths, while he sought a crossing which could be accomplished dryshod. But Ali misled us, and it was some time before the caravan was collected upon the right track. We had, however, not gone far after discovering this error before there was another alarm. The Khan, my wife, and I, were riding a quarter of a mile in

advance of the servants and baggage, when we heard loud cries of "Houssein!" "Houssein!" and saw a tramp who had, for his own convenience, attached himself to our caravan, running towards us, screaming, as Persians do whenever they are excited. I turned and galloped back in the darkness, expecting at least to find Houssein in the hands of robbers. He was only bruised by a tumble from his saddle, in which he had fallen asleep.

The way from Kasveen to Tehran is very uninteresting; the road is "where you please," for the stony plain belongs almost entirely to the rider; there is little attempt at cultivation. Now and then there is a parallelogram surrounded by a mud wall twelve feet high, the rude fortification of a village, such as we rested in the night after leaving Abdulabad. It was called by a name which sounded like Gosrozink; and after riding through a hole in the mud fortification, and between two ranges of miserable huts, which served as a bazaar, we arrived at the place wherein it was proposed we should sleep. The Khan had gone on before, and when we arrived he was sitting on the wide ledge of the bramble-roofed gateway, through which every mule entering the yard must pass. He was scooping a water melon with the utmost composure and contentment, while a servant, who had arrived before us, emerged, broom in hand, from a dark hole opposite, a cave constructed

of mud cement, with no other light but that from a small door opening beneath the gateway. Houssein seemed conscious that it would be pronounced an intolerable lodging; and when I pointed in preference to one house in the village which had a room raised upon the roof of the ground floor, he at once darted off, and to my horror I saw him flinging out the furniture, which consisted of bundles of rags and a few pots of earthenware, before, as it seemed to me, he had consulted the wishes of the proprietor. But it soon appeared that he was not wrong in taking this for granted. The lady of the house hurried up the ladder which led to the apartment I coveted, and assisted in the removal and sweeping. Then I saw that the room had no door; but this it was not difficult to supply with a rug. The place was a fine observatory for watching the doings of Gosrozink. Across the squalor of the undrained village, over the enclosing wall, which was literally and purely built of mud, the view of the mountains was delightful; and as the moollah of the village loudly proclaimed the hour of prayer, numbers of the people knelt upon their roofs, and made their evening prostrations and prayers in the direction of Mecca. In the zigzag ways of the village were stored those wretched primeval ploughs which from the Adriatic Sea to the Pacific Ocean are the bane of agriculture. A beam of wood three or four inches in diameter, with a prong of wood (not

always tipped with iron) fixed at an angle of 45°; that is the plough with which the rich lands of Greece, of Turkey, of Persia, and eastward to the Ocean, are tilled. The plough of the time of Herodotus and of Constantine, was in shape precisely the same as that which scratches the soil of these countries to-day. Who would venture to say what might be the increase in the production of corn, if the light iron ploughs of English manufacture were to pass into general use throughout Eastern Europe and in Asia?

It is terribly wearisome to ride over a plain so flat that, in the morning, one can see the goal of the evening—a ride in which nine hours of travelling bring no material change of landscape. When the sun rose, shortly after we left Gosrozink, we could see almost the lowest rock of the spur of the Elburz Mountains, under which lay a palace of the Shah, where the Khan had promised us we should, through his influence, obtain good lodging for the last night of our long journey. We reached the palace early in the afternoon, scarcely less tired than our horses with the heat and dust. It is one of half a dozen palaces in the neighbourhood of Tehran, and was last occupied by the Shah when his Majesty returned from London.

There are palaces and palaces, and this palace of Karij is not in accord with the English notion of a palace. The gateway, placed in the mud wall which

surrounds the buildings and gardens, is in style a compound of a Swiss chalet and a Chinese pagoda. It opens into a large yard, where we dismounted. The Khan assisted, and then offered his arm in English fashion, to the evident astonishment of the Shah's domestics, to lead the lady of the party to the palace. Through a side door we passed from the yard into a garden, and beneath trellised fig-trees, walked by a shady path to the main building. This was long and narrow, crossed near each end by two staircases, a large landing on the first floor dividing the back and front stairs. The steps were painfully steep, and covered with blue-glazed tiles, which were generally broken.

Not the Shah-in-Shah,* or any other potentate, could maintain a dignified deportment while climbing up such steps as those of any one of his palaces. With few exceptions, an easy staircase seems to be one of the latest triumphs of civilisation. The imperial steps in the Roman Colosseum are so high that the Cæsars must have looked like bears climbing a pole or alpine travellers in difficulty, when mounting to their throne in that vast amphitheatre. We found the Shah's stairs really painful after our tiresome ride. On the landing, there were double doors on either

* This title, "Shah-in-Shah" (King of Kings), is said to have been originally assumed by the Persian monarchs in right of their suzerainty over four kings, those of Affghanistan, Georgia, Kurdistan, and Arabistan.

hand, covered with a rough red paint, and without locks or handles. We entered on one side the large saloon of the palace, the only apartment which contained a single article of furniture, and in this room the solitary provision was a carpet, or rather four carpets ; one large carpet in the centre, and thick felts extending for about six feet from the wall on three sides. At both ends of the room, from the roof half way down the wall, were paintings, each containing the portraits, or supposed portraits, of about a dozen Shahs, every monarch having a square black beard of impossible dimensions and singular uniformity. There was one thing in the saloon beside the carpets—a large, circular metal tray, about a yard in diameter, on which were three large melons, cut in halves, for our refreshment. I think every half melon was more or less scooped before the tray was carried away, and we left the saloon to look at our bedroom, which was a large oblong, with doors opening upon the mud-cement roof of the under offices, of which our servants had taken possession, with the result of filling the place with the smoke of their cooking fire, for which they had to purchase wood.

The light of the bedroom came from the ends, according as we raised or lowered the heavy wooden shutters. There were no other windows. On the rubbishy concrete floor there was a layer of dust, which rose in small clouds as we walked across the

room. It was not without hard labour that we shook off the dust of the Shah's bedroom from our carpets the next morning before starting for Tehran. This palace of Karij possesses a feature not uncommon in the residences of the Shah—a tower joined to, but easily shut against access from, the palace—a high, square building, ascended by flights of stairs, with slits for windows, just large enough to admit a glimmer of light. There is no ornament or furniture; the tower is merely a place of temporary retreat and security in case of sudden attack or attempted revolution. I have spoken of a "bedroom," but a Persian palace has, properly speaking, no apartments specially devoted to sleeping. The Khan, in the true Persian fashion, passed the night on the thick Khorassan felt upon the floor of the saloon.

One looks in vain for the signs of a great city on approaching the capital of Persia. The plain is stony, nearly level, and utterly wearisome. There are strings of camels and droves of asses entering and leaving the city; much of the daily food, all the fire-wood, and all the foreign produce consumed in Tehran, must be so conveyed. A wheeled carriage for such service is never seen. No fine building presents a remarkable outline. At one or two points, the sun's rays gleam upon the vitrified tiles of the dome of a mosque or shrine; but these are miserable in elevation. Nobody knows how many people there are in

Tehran: some say fifty thousand; some say eighty thousand; but in other countries and climates, a town with twenty thousand inhabitants makes far more show. Were it not for the plane trees, one might overlook Tehran as one would a sleeping crocodile on the banks of the Nile. The city is of the colour and of the material of the plain. It is a city of mud in an oasis of plane trees. The flat roofs continue the level of the plain. As one approaches Tehran in autumn, the eye passes over the wretched dwellings, is relieved with the verdure of the trees, and delights in the high mountains, of which the tallest summits, covered with perpetual snow, chill the evening and the early morning air, even at that season.

The area within the heaps of earth which form the defences of Tehran, is much larger than the city. For the most part there is no wall; only an irregular trench, at the side of which the excavated sand has been carelessly heaped. We approached the Kasveen gate in quite a cavalcade. The Khan's brother, his two sons held by servants upon white donkeys, and three mounted servants, had ridden an hour from the city to meet him. A man seated on the extreme end of a donkey had come out from Prevôt's, the hotel of Tehran, having heard by telegraph of our probable arrival. Altogether we formed a small crowd in passing the gate, which, like all the entrances to Tehran, reminds one of Tunbridge ware. The style of building,

and the mode of arranging the glazed bricks, of various colours, is like nothing so much as the surface of the boxes one buys, or does not buy, at that pleasant town in Mid-Kent.

No European could enter the gates of Tehran for the first time without a feeling of intense disappointment: the city appears so insignificant in area and elevation. One sees nothing but wide, dusty spaces, broken occasionally by a mud wall of precisely the same colour as the road. After riding within the gates across country for about a mile, through holes in the walls of dusty enclosures which looked as if somebody had at one time thought them worth a mud wall, and on second thoughts had arrived at an opposite conclusion, we came to something that had in the uniformity of its width the aspect of a street; but, like all the other ways of Tehran, this was bounded by apparently interminable walls of mud, broken only at about every twenty or thirty yards by an iron-bound door, the single sign that this erection was the outer wall of habitations. At last, we arrived in the Belgravia of the Persian capital—the place of highest fashion; and there the only difference was, that the twelve-foot wall was panelled, and the mud cement covered with finer plaster and washed over with blue, upon which were scrolled decorations moulded in the same plaster.

The uniformity and ugliness of some of our own

streets—say Gower Street, for example—are bad enough; but a brick wall would be worse; and a brick is a thing of beauty and of many colours compared with mud. Dried mud is the prevailing material and colour in Tehran. One of the principal sites in the city is occupied by the “taziah” or theatre, in which religious representations are given, after the manner of the Ober-Ammergau Passion-plays, of the sufferings and death of Houssein. The front of this building is a good specimen of modern Persian architecture, which in England we should recognise as the Rosherville or Cremorne style—the gewgaw, pretentious, vulgar, and ephemeral style, erected in those places of amusement, only to be seen at night, and to last for a season. The façade is shaped like a small transept of the Crystal Palace, and covered with florid, coarse decorations in plaster, with beadings of bits of coarse looking-glass, bright blue, red, yellow, and green being plentifully laid upon the plaster wherever there is opportunity. Behind this is the Shah’s palace, which is better, in that the plaster is uncoloured. The gate which leads to this central enclosure, the citadel or *arg* (the same word probably as “ark”) of Tehran, is of the same Tunbridge-ware pattern as the town gates; but the arches are filled with extravagant representations, in tiles of the coarsest colours, of the triumphs of legendary heroes of Persia over terrible creatures

which can have existed only in the fancy of the artist. The excessively grotesque in these mosaics gives them a certain curious interest. It is upon the inner side of this gateway that one sees to what a low level Persian art has descended. The ornaments of this most important and central gate in Tehran are representations of Persian soldiers, life size, the painting of the glazed tiles being very much such as is seen in the east end of London upon the street bills of the lowest music halls. In drawing, each soldier is like the "men" we are accustomed to see from the pencil of children of three or four years old. The features of each man are upon one plan; they have the same leer as those of his companions; the moustache is a brick-and-a-half long, and the black boots are hanging painfully as if tortured in the search for some clod or cloud to stand upon. The ornamentation of the exterior of some of the mosques with these coloured bricks, chiefly of light blue and yellow, is very effective; but we met with no place in which this work was not more or less disfigured by ruin, and repair does not seem to be the business of any person or department.

From one end of Persia to the other, this miserable condition of decay, dilapidation, and ruin is characteristic of all public edifices—the mosques, palaces, bridges—everything. It is probably correct to say

that this invariable condition is a consequence of the universal corruption of the Government. The work of maintenance and repair belongs to the Executive Government, and the funds which should be thus expended pass into the rapacious pockets of the governors of the country. The gross neglect of useful public works in Persia recalled to my mind a passage in which Adam Smith refers to this as one of the worst symptoms of the worst administration. He nearly describes the state of things in Persia in the following passage, which had reference to the condition of the bye-roads in France about the middle of the eighteenth century ; with the difference, that in Persia no one delights in expenditure of any sort for the public advantage. Expenditure is never made except with a view to private plunder. “The proud Minister of an ostentatious Court may frequently take pleasure in executing a work of splendour and magnificence, such as a great highway which is frequently seen by the principal nobility, whose applauses not only flatter his vanity, but even contribute to support his interest at Court. But to execute a number of little works, in which nothing that can be done can make any great appearance, or excite the smallest degree of admiration in any traveller, and which, in short, have nothing to recommend them but their extreme utility, is a business which appears in every respect too mean

and paltry to merit the attention of so great a magistrate. Under such an administration, therefore, such works are almost entirely neglected.”*

Passing from north to south, almost the first house in Tehran, and certainly the best, is that of the British Legation. John Bull must have been caught in a liberal mood and with loose purse-strings when the vote was taken for this array of buildings—or is it not probable that poor India helped to pay for this residence? In Persia, it is the fixed idea of all people, that Russia and England are rival Powers. The ascendancy of the influence of one or the other at the Court of the Shah varies with men and circumstances. But although the Russian Legation is not nearly so fine a place as the house of the British Minister, yet it is generally understood in Tehran that at present Russian authority is predominant. Most Persian Statesmen have a decided leaning towards England; and his Highness Mirza Houssein Khan, the present Chief Minister of the Shah, is no exception. But, of course, the Persian liking for England is a natural preference for that Power which is the less suspected of designs upon the independence of the country. However, it is certainly believed that a complainant is better off when he is backed by the Russian

* “Wealth of Nations,” Book V. art. 3, part i.

Envoy. The Sadr Azem, as the Chief Minister is called (though Houssein Khan was Sipar Salar, Commander-in-Chief, when we were in Tehran), may prefer the English Envoy to the Russian; but I have no doubt whatever that he would move more quickly at the demand of the latter. From the British Legation, in a straight southward line, are the taziah, the palace, and further on, the most interesting part of the town, the bazaars and caravanserais. It is there one can take the truest measure of Persian civilisation. Every one knows what an Oriental bazaar is like; in Tehran it is a labyrinth of narrow ways, some of which are covered with well-executed brick arching, in which customers, camels, donkeys, Persians of high degree, attended by half-a-dozen servants, who rudely clear a way for the great man; Persians of low degree, and in almost every stage of undress; veiled women, and once a week perhaps a European, jostle all day long, while the sellers sit mute and motionless, rarely soliciting the custom of the throng. The dark shade, flecked with patches of bright sunlight, which is perhaps not the least noticeable feature of an Oriental bazaar, is broken occasionally by the entry to a caravanserai or mosque. The commercial caravanserais are sometimes attractive, the centre of the open square being occupied by fountains, and the space itself with plane trees. Around the square, in

large boxes, closed with heavy wooden shutters when the day's work is over, sit the merchants. The name of the finest caravanserai recalls to mind the great crime of the Shah's long reign—the cruel execution at his Majesty's word, of the most honest and best of his Ministers, the Ameer-el-Nizam. The "Caravanserai Ameer" of Tehran is known on all the paths of Persia.





CHAPTER XI.

Tehran—Street of the Foreign Envoys—The British Minister—Lanterns of Ceremony—The English in Tehran—The Shah's Palace—Mirza Houssein Khan—The Sipar Salar—An Oriental Minister—Persian corruption—Mirza Houssein Khan's policy—His retinue—Brigandage in Persia—Saloon of Audience—The Jewelled Globe—The Shah's Throne—The Old Hall—Persians and the Alhambra—The Shah receiving homage—Rustem and the White Devil—Reports in Tehran—The English courier—Character of Persian Government—The Green Drawing-room—The Shah's album—Persians and patriots—The Shah's jewels—The “Sea of Light.”

AT an open door in the wall of the best street in Tehran, which I have referred to as the “Belgravea” of the city, and which might be called “the Street of the Foreign Envoys,” our twelve days’ march ended. We were at Prevôt’s, a Persian house, kept by a Frenchman as an hotel, with Armenian servants. We found three small rooms prepared for us, looking upon a paved yard about as large as the rooms, with a doorway leading to the larger quadrangle, which forms the usual centre of a house in Tehran. From the windows we could see a plastered wall four yards distant, and that was all; a miserable, depressing prospect in a city the situation of which is highly picturesque. In an hour I called on the English

Minister, Mr. Taylour Thomson, whose visit to us the next morning was followed by entertainments, which made us more or less acquainted with the European element in the population of Tehran.

Mr. Thomson is in some points undoubtedly well qualified for his post. But it only is just to say that his long service in countries so remote as Persia and Chili (he acted as Chargé d'Affaires for fifteen years in South America) has had the natural and inevitable consequence. Mr. Thomson is far better acquainted with Persian modes of thought and with Persian politics than with the affairs, and the thoughts, and the policy of his own country, and I am inclined to doubt very much if this is desirable for one in his position. Local knowledge is unquestionably valuable—it is, indeed, indispensable; but I believe it to be far more important that the Envoy of a country should be closely familiar with the mind and disposition of those whom Lord Derby has lately called his “employers,” and this cannot be the possession of a man whose memory has to pass over five and forty years before it reaches the time when he was resident in England.

Mr. Thomson is a man in whom strength of will and directness of speech, two important qualities in English dealings with Orientals, are plainly marked; his deficiencies, I should say, are due to the absence of a lifetime from the polishing influence of the capitals of Europe, and in political knowledge, from

the stimulating action of English opinion, which, during the years of his long and honourable diplomatic service, has undergone a change far more remarkable than was ever brought about at one stroke by the swift agency of revolution.

He has mastered, and that is no small matter, the curiosities of Persian etiquette. It baffles the simple English mind to conceive a plan by which rank can be indicated at night, in a dark, unlighted city, where the streets are full of holes. But with the Persian, rank is everything, and this is denoted at night according to the size and number of lanterns by which the progress of the great is illuminated. The ceremonious lanterns of Tehran, about eighteen inches in diameter, have a metal top and bottom, the intervening and luminous space being of plain or coloured linen, about a yard deep. Through a ring in the top, the bearer passes his arm, and, holding it high, he can just keep the lantern from off the ground as he walks. On the occasion of a dinner at the British Legation, or any similar festival elsewhere, these lanterns are seen advancing from all quarters, followed by guests, who are invisible in the surrounding gloom.

We were received with much kindness by the English in Tehran. I can imagine nothing more wearisome than their position. Their houses, for the most part built in Persian fashion, are dull beyond description, because they have no view of the grand

out-look upon the mountains, to which it is always a relief to turn from the wretchedness of Tehran. They have what they call "a drive"—a long, straight road over the plain in the direction of a suburban palace belonging to the Shah—a road which is flat, tedious, and horribly dusty, one of those dreadful promenades of which the end is seen from the commencement. They have their parties, their coursings, their balls, in all of which they are doomed to look on combinations of the same faces. "We are now," writes one of them, "looking forward to a ball next Monday, given by —, the — Chargé d'Affaires. Fifty-eight Europeans are invited; they are all sure to come, and as the ladies do not number, all told, fifteen, the black-coat element necessarily preponderates." Narrowness is born of such circumstances, but there is an absence of scandal among the European community of Tehran which is praiseworthy.

The English Minister obtained permission for us to visit the Shah's palace in Tehran, and added the honour and advantage of his company. As is usual in Tehran, Mr. Thomson's carriage was surrounded by mounted servants. It is impossible to avoid much ceremony when the English Minister visits the palace. We passed through the gate of the citadel adorned with the soldiers, to the taziah, which closes the end of the street. Then, turning between the walls of the palace gardens, which were lined with lounging

guards, we alighted at the simple entrance to one of the courtyards of the palace, the buildings of which are all low, and divided by these enclosures, in which there are rows of tall plane trees and paved rectangular walks.

The Minister was received by a large cluster of officials and servants, with whom we approached the principal hall of audience, which resembles an open temple. There is a mixture of Swiss and Chinese forms in the construction of the wooden roof, the sides of which are supported by four large twisted columns richlygilded. There are hangings of stout hempen stuff, by which the whole saloon can be protected from the weather ; but the intention is that it should be open, and the Shah's reception visible to all upon the lower level of the courtyards. This is the place in which his Majesty (who was at the time living in one of his palaces near the Caspian shore) receives, on the occasion of a salaam or levée, the diplomatic body and other persons of distinction. This saloon is raised by six high steps from the courtyard, and is nearly sixty feet long, with a width of about twenty-five feet. From the richly-carpeted floor, we overlooked the courtyards, through which ran a stream of clear water, passing beneath the saloon in a paved channel.

We were enjoying a first glance at this curious apartment, the ceiling of which is set with facets of looking-glass (these, if they had been clean, would

have been gorgeous with prismatic colours), when a posse of barefooted servants entered, something after the manner of a theatrical procession, evidently preceding some very great personage. It was his Highness the Sipar Salar, acting Prime Minister of the Shah, Mirza Houssein Khan, who, when he accompanied his Imperial master to London, was Sadr Azem, which is the highest official title, and is, in fact, the Persian equivalent of Prime Minister. But Mirza Houssein Khan is not a popular man, and upon his return to Persia with his Majesty the Shah, a storm of hatred had risen against him, to which the Shah inclined so far as to deprive his clever Minister of the title of Sadr Azem. The life of Mirza Houssein Khan was thought to be in danger, and it is said in Tehran that an order for his execution was arrested only by reminding the Shah that one who has the Grand Cross of the Star of India must, as a member of a most illustrious English brotherhood, be regarded as a person not to be given over to the knife or the bowstring of the executioner, without consideration for the opinion of Europe.

The Sipar Salar, next to the Shah, himself, the greatest personage in the country, was in undress uniform of Russian cut. His overcoat resembled precisely, excepting its ornaments, that of a Russian officer. He wore the Persian hat, black trousers, and "pumps" of polished leather, which made a considerable exposition

of his white stockings. Probably his Highness wore these slight shoes in order to place himself upon equality with the Europeans who were treading the Imperial carpets in their walking boots. In pumps, he was equal to the customs of either continent ; these could easily be laid aside if he desired to appear in Persian fashion, in his stockings. His Highness was the only Persian whose feet were shod. Of his large retinue of more than fifty persons, those who mounted with the Sipar Salar into the saloon had left their shoes upon the pavement below. Mirza Houssein Khan is a man about middle height and middle-age, with, for a Persian, commonplace features, full of mobility and expressing great cleverness. He talks French fluently, and has a quick, *rusé* manner. An artificial manner is cultivated by Persians, who in public affairs and correspondence do not affect sincerity. The Sipar Salar is a man whom, even at first sight, one feels little disposed to trust ; a Statesman of very superior ability and intelligence, probably spoiled by the cruel difficulties of his position. If the reports current in Tehran are true, his Highness has not found it easy to keep his head on his shoulders in a great position in a country governed by a wayward despot, whose mind may at any time be fatally influenced against his Minister.

An Oriental Minister, even so clever a man as Mirza Houssein Khan, does not seem desirous of

pushing his own country into European grooves when he has travelled in the Western Continent. If such ideas ever enter into such minds they are, at all events, soon abandoned. He has, and that in itself is no small advantage, a truer estimate than can be formed by his untravelled countrymen of the strength, power, and wealth of the nations of Europe. But it is the Palais Royal of Paris rather than the Palace of Westminster which fills the largest place in his mind. His longing as a rule turns rather to the former than the latter. In his shallow, courteous conversation Mirza Houssein Khan did not appear to me to have any other view for Persia than that of battling with the difficulties of his own position, which I have no doubt are very engrossing. As he is certainly in experience the ablest and most competent of Persian Statesmen, Mirza Houssein Khan would seem to be the right man in the right place. But his is a position which would break the heart of a good man. One can imagine a good man killing himself in the effort to reform the government of Persia. But success would seem impossible, and endurance must lead to compromise with evil and corruption of every sort. A violent death would be the likely end of a good man in such a position, and wealth that of one who would accept the place and swim in the stream of corruption.

People say that Mirza Houssein Khan has preferred

the latter course. A week before we met his Highness on this visit to the Shah's palace, the following was written for publication with reference to him by a resident in Tehran, who has had opportunity of forming a mature judgment upon the estimation in which this undoubtedly able Minister is held in Persia :—

“ Since Mirza Houssein Khan has been at the head of affairs in Persia, the country both socially and politically has followed a visibly retrograde movement. On him at one time all hopes of progress were centred; his promises of reform were great; but events have now shown either that he never meant to keep those promises, or that he is incapable of the task. Of all the influences that act against the true interests of the State, the selfish ambition and the avarice of this powerful Minister have been perhaps the most effectual. To keep in his own hands the whole power of Government, and to enrich himself by these means, are with him the sole ends of existence; and to effect his purpose, he leads the Shah's attention as much as possible away from public affairs while his Majesty is at home, which is now rarely the case, as his chief adviser contrives to persuade him to undertake repeated journeys into the provinces. Thus it happens that during the last eight months the Shah has passed barely ten days in the capital. His Majesty is now on a hunting expedition near Sari, in Mazandaran :

and Mirza Houssein Khan, left completely his own master, has surrounded himself with almost regal pomp. Yesterday, at the Beiram ceremony of the salaam [a levée held by the third son of the Shah], he was followed by a cortége more numerous than that which the King himself leads on great occasions. In contrast with these displays, the affairs of Government have fallen into deplorable confusion, and oppression has become so rampant that an open manifestation of popular discontent is to be expected. Never was there a more unpopular Minister. Two years ago, when the Mirza was execrated as a reformer by the nobles and the priesthood, he succumbed for a time to the opposition of these Conservative classes; now that the hatred of the populace is added to that of his political rivals, his fall, when it comes, will be signal indeed. It is not to be denied that brigandage is flourishing in Persia. Caravans and travellers are plundered at the very gates of Tehran. Want and oppression have turned the most peaceful of the population into highwaymen."

It may be that Mirza Houssein Khan, who nearly lost his life on account of his reputation as a reformer on his return from London, is now content if he can keep his head on his shoulders and himself above all his rivals on the surface of the foul pool of official life in Persia.

Close to the insignificant doorway by which we

entered the saloon, there is hung upon the wall a very large picture, which, somewhere about the centre, contains a full-length portrait of the Emperor of Austria. The picture is so large and is hung in so important a position, that, should other monarchs who are on friendly terms make the Shah a similar present, it would be quite impossible for his Imperial Majesty to give even to one of them an equally advantageous display. When the Shah received this portrait he resolved to present in return a likeness of himself, and declared it should be placed in a frame of solid gold. But inquiry and calculation modified his Majesty's intentions, and at last he consented to order a gilt frame in Francis Joseph's own capital city. Beneath this huge canvas are hung a landscape and a sea-piece, evidently purchased from some French gallery, the small tin plate bearing the exhibition number of each picture being still in the corner.

It is at the opposite end of this saloon that the "Shadow of God" sits on his heels or stands to receive the Envoys of Europe. But the Shah's moveable throne was not occupying the central niche. There, in that place of honour, we were permitted to gaze upon one of the characteristic feats, perhaps the greatest art-work, of his Majesty's long reign. This is an eighteen-inch globe, covered with jewels from the North Pole to the extremities of the tripod in which this gemmed sphere is placed. The story goes that

his Majesty bought—more probably accepted, at all events was in possession of—a heap of jewels, for which he could find no immediate purpose. Nothing could add to the lustre of his crown of diamonds, which is surmounted by the largest ruby we have ever seen, including those of her Majesty and the Emperors of Germany and Russia. He had the “Sea of Light,” a diamond in size but little inferior to the British Koh-i-Noor, the “Mountain of Light.” He had coats embroidered with diamonds, with emeralds, with rubies, with pearls, and with garnets ; he had jewelled swords and daggers without number ; so possibly because his Imperial mind was turned towards travel, the Shah ordered this globe to be constructed, covered with gems—the over-spreading sea to be of emeralds, and the kingdoms of the world distinguished by jewels of different colour. The Englishman notes with pride and gratification that England flashes in diamonds, and a Frenchman may share the feeling, for France glitters illustrious as the British Isles, being set out in the same most costly gems. The dominion of the Shah’s great neighbour, the brand-new Empress of India, is marked with amethysts, while torrid Africa blazes against the literally emerald sea, a whole continent of rubies.

Near the globe, side by side with a French couch, worth perhaps a hundred francs, stands the Shah’s throne, which is, of course, arranged for sitting after

the manner of the country. It occupies a space almost as large as Mr. Spurgeon's or Mr. Ward Beecher's pulpit, for the occupants of this throne are fond of space, and occasionally have a kalian of wonderful dimensions with them upon the splendid carpet, which is fringed with thousands of pearls. The embroidered bolster upon which the Shah rests his back or arm, is sewn with pearls. Behind his Majesty's head is a "sun," all glittering with jewels, supported at the corners with birds in plumage of the same most expensive material.

On the other side of the niche in which the globe stands, there is a table grimy with dust and extremely incongruous, the top inlaid with the beautiful work of Florence, and a model, in Sienna marble, of the Arch of Titus, both gifts from his Holiness the infallible Pope. Near these presents, in a recess, and in a very common wooden frame, is a portrait of the late Sir Henry Havelock; and, not far off, a timepiece with "running water" and a nodding peacock, a gift from the defunct East India Company in the days when Shahs received such toys as pleased them, and were not considered eligible as Knights of the great Orders of European Courts.

At a short distance, is another and a much older hall, still more exposed to public view. In this pavilion, which is built to cover and give increased dignity to the ancient throne of the Shah, the arrangements are

wholly Persian. The marble floor is raised not more than three feet above the pavement of a large oblong courtyard, up the broad paths of which the sons of Iran throng to make salaam before their monarch. The Shah sits in the motionless majesty of an Oriental potentate, upon a high throne built of the alabaster-like greenish marble of Yezd, the platform which the "Shadow of God" occupies, being supported upon animals, having the same queer resemblance to lions which is noticed in the supporters of the great fountain of the Alhambra at Granada. With reference to this likeness, and to other points of resemblance, both in this palace and in the decorations in some of the modern palaces of Persia, Major Murdoch Smith, R.E., the accomplished director of the Indo-Persian Telegraph, has indicated, in a report to the Council of South Kensington Museum, the probability that the Alhambra of Granada was itself designed by Persian architects ; and with regard to this supposition, has pointed to the statement of Señor Rivadeneyra concerning the existence of official documents assigning Rioja in Spain to "Persians" as a place of residence.

The ceiling of this old reception hall in the Shah's Palace at Tehran, is fashioned in stalactites, like the ceilings in the ruins of the famous Oriental palace in Spain, and then covered with pieces of looking-glass, which, if the work was not bad, and the glass were cleaned, would have a very glittering effect. Exter-

nally the roof is suggestive of a Chinese pagoda. In this pavilion, the background of which is hung with a few pictures in frames of looking-glass, including a portrait of a singularly handsome young Englishman, formerly attached to the British Legation, the Shah reclines upon the marble platform of his throne, on those very great occasions when the hundred and fifty yards of the enclosure before it are filled with a moving crowd of his subjects, to whom he is the impersonation of law and authority. For their reverent homage, he makes no sign of gratification or acknowledgment. The "proper thing" for his Majesty to do, when thus exhibiting himself in solemn state, is to regard their expression of loyalty and devotion as something far beneath his notice, and probably the Imperial gaze passing over their heads is now and then fixed upon the coarse mosaic on the wall at the end of the courtyard, showing how Rustem, the "Arthur," the legendary hero, of Persia, destroyed the White Devil; an encounter, it should be remembered, of authenticity as respectable as that of St. George and the familiar Dragon, which is stamped upon so many of the current coins of England.

I had scarcely ceased talking with the Sipar Salar, whom I had seen at several entertainments in London, when one of the numerous company whispered in my ear, pointing to his Highness, "He had one of his wives strangled lately." I did not for a moment

believe that this was anything but a piece of idle gossip, yet it is worth recording, because it is one of many pieces of evidence which came to our notice indicating the bad state of society in Persia, owing to the uncivilized system prevailing both in the family and in the State. Perhaps the worst symptom of the body politic in Persia, is, that no one hesitates in ascribing horrible crimes to the most highly-placed men in the State, and that the venality of such exalted persons in regard to the misappropriation of public money, is regarded as a foregone conclusion.

A few days before our visit to the palace, the talk of all the soldiery in Tehran, as we heard from several of their officers, had been that the Crown Prince, the Governor of Tabriz, had caused his wife to be strangled in his presence. Homicide or murder is a prerogative of royalty in Persia. But what was most amazing, was the ready reception given to the report, which was regarded, even by Europeans, as quite authentic. The report was untrue; it had origin in the fact that the Prince's aunt had lately sent a second wife to her illustrious nephew in Tabriz, and the anger and grief of the first wife on seeing the new arrival, had been magnified into her death. The Minister of Public Works is said to double his estimates, and to retain the surplus for himself, after silencing those whose mouths must be stopped. The frequent robberies of the messengers of the British

Legation, while carrying letters and despatches overland from Tehran to Trebizonde, have been the subject of much talk, and Persians wag their heads and say that this happens because his Highness Mirza Houssein Khan likes to read Mr. Thomson's letters to Lord Derby, and the replies of the British Foreign Office.

With reference to this curious charge, I will make the following extract from a letter written by a resident in Tehran, dated November 2, 1875 :—"The English courier, on its last journey from Constantinople, was attacked and robbed on or near the frontier. The previous courier had been stopped and examined by the police at Tabriz, on suspicion of smuggling contraband goods into the country. As the English parcels alone were opened, however, the couriers of the other Legations never meeting with adventures of this kind, some people affirm that the attack upon the British post was instigated by the Mushir-ul-Dowleh himself, who wished to intercept or to make himself acquainted with the contents of certain despatches. I cannot of course pretend to say whether or not this assertion is true, but it must be said that the Mirza's known unscrupulousness, gives it some colour."

It is universally believed that a little money will mitigate, and that much money will obviate, the punishment of crime. That every "hakem" or gover-

nor, may commit offences against the property and lives of the Shah's subjects within his province with impunity, no one seems to doubt. It matters little, in forming our judgment as to the social condition of Persia, whether these reports are true or false. They are not all true—some are certainly false—they may all be false, and yet the tacit, unastonished acceptance of them as true by the populace, implies that they have at least the common flavour of the ordinary fruits of Persian government.

From the great halls of state, the Commander-in-Chief, the Minister of Commerce, and other Persian grandees led our party to an orange house, through the centre of which ran the stream of clear water I have noticed before as passing beneath the saloon of the gilded columns. On the marble pavement beside this running water there were chairs and couches arranged, upon which his Highness invited us to be seated. Snowy sherbet and warm tea were then served, and afterwards we proceeded to a more homely saloon than those we had seen. The architecture of this room, a succession of arcades, again carried our thoughts to Spain in its resemblance to the mosque, now the cathedral, of Cordova. It was a large oblong apartment, the walls coloured green with raised decorations in white plaster, the room containing three rows of arches. On the walls were a great many pictures very irregularly hung. Many had

in the corner the exhibition number in the gallery from which the Shah had bought them during his recent tour; and in no very conspicuous place was a small portrait of her Majesty, a gift presented by Mr. Thomson to the Shah on behalf of the Queen. The floor was of parqueterie work, and upon it stood several Sèvres jars of great value. Very uncomfortable chairs, evidently bought by people with little knowledge of what a chair should be, were ranged against the walls. On a table, lay a photographic album containing the portraits of actresses, of whose personal charms the Shah may be supposed to have become acquainted by report and by diligent attendance at theatres during his stay in Europe. At one end of the apartment was an object in strange contrast with the trumpery by which it was surrounded. This was an awkward, ugly chair of state studded with jewels, having a footstool, before which stood a cat-like representation of a lion, each eye a single emerald and the body rugged with a coating of other precious stones. It was so entirely in keeping with the mixture we had everywhere observed, that the stand upon which this chair was placed should be studded with white-headed German nails worth about two-pence a dozen!

None of the great rooms of the palace have covered communications, and from this green saloon we crossed another open court to a pavilion in which the Shah

frequently gives audience, which is distinguished by the possession of an English carpet and by the exhibition upon the walls of two fine pieces of Gobelins tapestry. One sees in the figures upon this tapestry and in the portraits upon walls of the palace, how far the Persians have departed from observing the rule which was certainly that of the architects of the Alhambra, and which is observed by the Turks and all Sunni Mahomedans, of excluding imitation or resemblance of life from the ornamentation of their public buildings.

In another room, we saw the Imperial jewels, which by special command of his Highness the Sipar Salar were laid out upon tables for our inspection. I fancy that no sovereign in Europe has a regalia of equal value. The Shah is especially rich in diamonds of large, but not the very largest size. He has a great number of which the surface is as large as a silver sixpence. The Imperial crown is topped with a ruby which is probably the largest in the world. The "Sea of Light," a flat, ill-cut diamond, mounted in a semi-barbaric ornament, is inferior to the great jewel worn by the Empress of India. The display of the Shah's riches in precious stones included of necessity the exhibition of several coats, the fronts of which are studded and embroidered with jewels. Several of these became well known during the Shah's tour, when they were shown to the admiring gaze of

European cities. There, too, was the wonderful aigrette, which the Shah's brow sustained during the grandest of the London entertainments, and beside these garments lay a number of jewelled swords and daggers. From the dazzling spectacle of this display we passed again to the orange house, where coffee and pipes were served, after which we took leave of the Shah's Ministers, his Highness the Sipar Salar having promised Mr. Thomson that we should be provided with Vizierial letters to the Governors of Koom, Kashan, Ispahan, Shiraz, and Bushire.





CHAPTER XII.

The Shah—The Kajar dynasty—Boxes of Justice—Persian soldiers—Their drill and pay—Military supper in Ramadan—Jehungur Khan—The Shah's presents—Zoological Garden—View from Tehran—Demavend—Persian fever—Persian honesty—Europeans and Persians—Caps and goloshes—A paper war—The Ottoman Embassy—A British complaint—A Turkish atrocity—Persian window law—English in bazaars—The Indo-European Telegraph stations in Persia—The English clergyman in Persia.

THE Shah is of the Kajar tribe—a dynasty yet young, the annals of which have been marked by great cruelties. Nazr-ed-deen Shah, Kajar, the reigning monarch, has in this matter a better character than his predecessors, with whom it has not been uncommon to put out the eyes of those relations who stood in their way to the throne, or who might be rivals when they had attained that position. The Shah himself is not unpopular, and is believed to have at heart the welfare of his subjects. Persians frequently speak of him as in personal character the best among the governing men of the country, and they are never shy in talking of their rulers. If there is any tempering in the Persian despotism, it is that of abuse of all who surround the despot. His

Majesty recently issued an order that a “Box of Justice” should be fixed in a prominent place in all the large towns for the reception of petitions, which were to be forwarded direct to himself. But the oppressors found means to thwart this innocent plan by setting a watch over the boxes and upon those who wished to forward petitions.

Thrice the amount of the British Prime Minister’s salary, or twice that of the President of the United States, does not satisfy men of the first official rank in Persia. And while the prince governors in the provinces and all the high functionaries of State plunge their greedy hands thus deep into the miserable revenue, forced—often at the bayonet’s point—from the poorest of peasants, the soldiery are not seldom marauders, with the excuse that they cannot obtain their pay from the Government. The creditors of the peasants and small traders are generally in the uniform of the Shah. In Persia, the trade of small money-lenders is usually carried on by soldiers, for these only feel sure of the requisite power to recover their loans. The defaulter well knows that if he does not repay the soldier, his house or his store in the bazaar will be plundered of all that is worth taking by a gang of military money-lenders.

There is a parade every morning in Tehran. It takes place in a dusty enclosure near the meidan, or principal square. We were present on several

occasions at these parades where European drill-instructors vainly laboured. The Persian soldiers are fine in physique, though they look more awkward I fancy even than Japanese, in European hats, tunics, and trousers. In England, one is apt to think that militiamen display every possible awkwardness in wearing an infantry hat and scarlet tunic; but the Persian soldiers beat the rawest of our militiamen. Some wear the hat on the back of their heads like a fez; others at the side; with some it falls over their eyes. Their drill is wretched. Their officers are probably the worst part of the force. This is the special weakness and inferiority of all Oriental armies. I saw a Persian officer box the ears of a private on the parade ground, rushing into the ranks to execute this summary punishment. There is a reason for the deficiency of the rank and file in drill. No soldier comes to parade who can obtain work in the city. The consequence is that the personnel of each skeleton regiment is changed every morning, and the unhappy drill-instructor has never before him the same body of men. But this immunity from service must of course be paid for, and the absent privates devote a portion of their earnings to their officers, who, from their colonel to the corporal, divide the fund contributed in respect of this temporary desertion. From the officers and middle class of State officials, a somewhat intricate method of plunder

is adopted. Their pay, although appropriated from the revenue, is withheld, and after repeated applications they are told that the Minister will advance the sum with a deduction to cover his personal risk. The offer is generally accepted from pressing necessity, and the gains of the higher functionaries from this line of conduct are said to be not inconsiderable. I was assured by an officer that he himself suffered this treatment, and that he knew it to be common in the civil and military service of the Shah.

Every evening in Ramadan, of which there remained some days after our arrival in Tehran, the Sipar Salar entertained a regiment at dinner. The repast was served by candlelight in the straight street between the gate of the citadel and the taziah. Two lines of thick felt (*nummud*) were laid equidistant from the centre of the street, leaving about a yard of the bare road between them. Shortly before the gun-fire, his Highness's guests were seated in long files upon the felt. After the gun had boomed permission, huge dishes, one to every four soldiers, each piled high with rice and stewed meat, were placed in the centre of the road, and were at once hidden from view by the over-hanging heads of the hungry men, every one hard at work with his fingers. Under such circumstances, the nearer the mouth can be brought to the dish, the larger is the share which can be pushed into it. Close over every dish, four heads were laid together,

and not a word was uttered till the platters were empty.

For the officers, there was spread a white cloth between the carpets, and a little adornment was attempted in the way of bouquets placed between the lighted candles, which were protected by Russian bell-glasses, and shone like glowworms down the long street. In company with a member of the British Legation, I was looking on, when Jehungur Khan, the adjutant-general of the Persian army, one of the stoutest and most courteous men in the country, asked us to join the soldiers in the fruit and tea which followed the pillau. We sat down, doing all we could to get rid of our legs, which had an awkward, natural tendency to cross the dining table. My immediate neighbours were officers of the Shah's irregular cavalry, gentlemen wearing turbans almost as broad as their shoulders, and with a very bashi-bazoukish look.

At that time a story was in circulation with reference to this Jehungur Khan, which is very possibly untrue, but, being accepted by many as correct, is curiously illustrative of Persian government. It was said that one of the courtiers who owed him a grudge had told the Shah that he (the adjutant-general) had saved eight thousand tomans out of a work in hand, and that he wished to present them to his Majesty. The King-of-kings is much addicted to presents, and, as usual, graciously signified his willingness to accept,

and Jehungur Khan had to produce the money, which he had *not* saved. The Shah does not appear to be very scrupulous in regard to presents. There is at least one tradesman in London from whom articles were purchased by order of his Majesty for presents to some of his ladies, which have not yet been paid for, and probably this is not the only city of Europe in which the Shah obtained articles of value in this way without paying for them.

In the quarter of the town near the Legations, there are several walled gardens, and one of these is devoted to zoology. We were about to apply for admission when an Englishman recommended us to remain outside. The caging of the few beasts was, he said, quite uncertain. The lion was sometimes observed taking an airing, roaming where he pleased within the walls ; and the bear had been seen from outside climbing a plane tree. One is named the Shah's "English" garden, and from this his Majesty lately received with great effusion, a bunch of radishes, as a present from his English gardener. If it were not for these gardens, the appearance of Tehran would indeed be miserable. We mounted upon one of the highest houses, from which we could overlook the city. Parallelograms of mud varied with cupolas of mud, representing the roofs of the houses, are the general features ; the long succession of mud roofs being now and then broken by the taller plane trees

and the cypresses of a garden. But the landscape is charming, and even the Himalayas do not present grander elevations than may be seen from Tehran; the loftiest peak of the Elburz Mountains in sight being that of Demavend, an extinct volcano, the top of which is not less than eighteen thousand five hundred feet above the sea level. The conical summit of this high mountain is covered with perpetual snow, and some of the peaks near Demavend are not of much inferior altitude.

At the latter end of October I was prostrated with fever. I remember that in the witless condition in which I lay, the pains appeared to my disordered imagination as if I was suffering from the effects of a terrible beating, and, with every muscle sore and painful, was condemned to be rolled about upon sheets of heated copper. When I became convalescent, the closeness of the apartments at Prevôt's seemed intolerable, and, through the kindness of a Danish officer, Mr. Læssøë, resident in Tehran, we removed to a suite of rooms in his house, which had been the residence of the French Legation. There we had a large garden, and an open view of the plain and mountains. Mr. Læssøë holds the position of chief instructor of artillery in the army of the Shah. His wife, from whom also we received much kindness, is a daughter of the distinguished painter, Madame Jerichau.

At the house of every European of position in

Tehran, there is a permanent guard of soldiers, who hurriedly forsake their pipe, or game of cards upon the dust, to present arms upon the arrival of any visitor. The doors of these houses are generally open throughout the day, and as Persians regard an open door as an invitation to enter, and the rooms are never locked, and rarely closed with anything more obstructive than a cotton curtain, it is necessary there should be some guard in the doorway. Europeans talk much of the dishonesty of Persians, but our experience did not confirm the bad opinion. Our suite of rooms in this mud-built house, which had formerly belonged to the French Envoy, opened upon a large square garden, enclosed by a mud wall, ruined and broken down in three or four places, by which any one might enter. Our doors and windows had no fastenings, and by either it was never difficult to enter the rooms from the garden. On the other side was a courtyard, with a fountain and a few trees in the centre, and this, except for the soldiers and servants who lay about in the passages connecting it with the crowded street, was quite open. Yet we never suffered any loss from theft.

The manner in which Europeans meet Persian habits half-way in their intercourse with the highest class of natives always appears to me ridiculous and humiliating. It is a cleanly habit, that of Mahomedans, not to enter their carpeted apartments in the shoes

they have worn in the mud of the filthy ways and streets of Oriental towns. No doubt if we could choose, many of us in London, would prefer that our visitors should carry their boots in their hands and their hats on their heads, rather than the reverse, especially upon a muddy day. But the English in Persia confound both practices in a most unseemly way. They wear their hats in the presence of Persians of high rank as a compromise with native prejudice, which from habit dislikes to see the head uncovered, and embarrass their feet with goloshes in order that they may leave these overshoes at the door of the great man's apartment. In the course of our own travels in Persia, I noticed this on the part of Europeans; but even after such experience, I was rather surprised to find it elevated to a duty in the recently published volumes edited by Sir Frederic G. Goldsmid, and entitled "Eastern Persia." By officers of the Boundary Commission, goloshes for ceremonious receptions were provided as indispensable, and the members of the Commission always sat on these occasions in their undress caps. I should fancy that to a quick-witted people like the Persians this appears very absurd. For my own part, in any intercourse with men of the highest rank and of the Imperial family in Persia, I never adopted these fashions. One need not soil carpets in a country where riding is universal, nor encourage premature baldness by wear-

ing one's hat when there is no need of shelter from the sun or the outer air.

During our stay in Tehran, a fierce paper war was raging with reference to a dispute which, in continuation of the above remarks, shows what a tendency Englishmen have to take local colouring in their domestic habits. The peculiar construction of Persian houses has an object, that of securing most complete privacy for the inmates. It is true that there is no part of a Persian house which cannot be looked into by any of the inhabitants, but this does not offend Mussulman ideas, of which the first is that the male head of the household is lord of all, and that none can have rights separate from his supreme authority. Persians much dislike rooms raised above the ground-floor, because these erections may enable neighbours to observe their domestic arrangements. Many tales are told of the fierce opposition which the intention to raise a second storey has aroused in the hearts of neighbours, and as a rule it is not permitted by the authorities to any one to build so as to overlook another house.

War had broken out upon this domestic question between the representatives of Great Britain and of the Ottoman Empire. The mediation of Persia had been called in, and Mirza Houssein Khan was engaged in arranging a treaty of peace and future amity. The British Envoy's object was to circumvent the wicked

and abominable design of the Ottoman Ambassador (the politicians of the Porte have as a rule no Mussulman prejudices) who had dared to build an Embassy-house in sight of that of Great Britain, and to add a second storey from which it was possible to see something of the ladies of the British Legation (the subsequent tale about the archives is too ridiculous to be true), if they happened to be walking in the extensive grounds in which are the houses of the secretaries and attachés as well as the residence of the Minister.

The Bulgarian atrocities had not then been heard of, and one might have thought that no subject of Great Britain need object to be exposed to the eye of a Turk with an interval of not less than five hundred yards. But this was not the view of the British Legation. That the British establishment should command a view of the Ottoman quarters was quite unobjectionable; but that the Turk should be able to cast an eye upon the Englishman's garden was intolerable. I do not know how this great international difficulty has been arranged, but since our return to England I have met with a published letter written about the time of our visit by a gentleman who lives in Tehran, which is probably, at least on some points, well informed. This correspondent says:—"A short time ago the Turkish Government hired a building for fifteen years to serve as a residence for its representative. The edifice stands within a few hundred yards

of the British Legation, which is surrounded by a garden enclosed by a high wall. The wall is, however, not high enough to conceal the upper part of the Legation. The Turks wished to add a storey to their Legation, but the English Minister on hearing of their intention, opposed it on the ground that if carried out it would afford to the denizens of the Turkish ‘palace’ a view into the apartments occupied by the secretaries of the English mission, and, to give greater weight to his assertion, said that the archives of the Legation would be exposed to prying eyes. The *Mushir-ul-Dowleh* received a complaint to this effect in due form from Mr. Thomson, and instead of declining to interfere in a matter which did not concern him, promised to arrange matters to the satisfaction of the English Minister. By his order a commission was appointed to examine the relative positions of the two edifices; but the result of their inspection was far from satisfactory for Mr. Thomson. They stated not only that the distance between the two Legations was too considerable to allow of any person in the Turkish Legation becoming acquainted from that vantage ground with the contents of any documents exposed to view in the archive office of the English Legation, the latter being situated at least a third of a mile from its Turkish neighbour, but that none of the windows of the English archive office faced the new building. They observed, more-

over, that if Mr. Thomson desired absolutely to conceal the roof of his habitation, he had only to add a foot or two to the height of his garden walls." The letter (which appeared in the *Levant Herald*) goes on to state that, undaunted by this adverse decision—"Mr. Thomson raised the precedent of one Melcom, an English subject at Bushire, who, in the course of certain building operations, was sued at law by some neighbours jealous of their privacy, and forced to abandon or modify his undertaking. The dispute has thus been placed in a new light. Either it is not lawful in Persia to have windows commanding a prospect of another man's house, even at a distance of five hundred yards, or it is lawful to have windows possessing that not uncommon peculiarity. In the former case, the Turkish Legation has no course left but to close up all its windows permanently and alter its façade; in the latter case, the judgment pronounced against Mr. Melcom of Bushire is illegal, and the Persian Government owes him heavy damages." Let us hope that this storm about mud-walls and windows has now been arranged to the satisfaction of all parties.

To my mind, the most interesting part of Tehran is to be found in the bazaars, which the Europeans of the Legations very rarely enter, and their ladies never. The men appear to regard the shoving about to which one must more or less submit in the narrow ways of

the bazaars as a serious infringement upon the dignity of their position, and the ladies consider a visit to the bazaars as simply impossible. The sight of an unveiled woman has no doubt a tendency to make Persians use language which cannot but be taken as insulting, and if Englishmen in their company are acquainted with Persian slang, they are likely enough to have a quarrel or two on hand in passing through a bazaar. Ignorance of the vernacular has unquestionably some advantages in Persia.

A long enclosure separates the buildings of the palace from the bazaars. There are in this open space two large tanks, at which camels, horses, mules, and men are always drinking. Upon a high stand, a very long, huge cannon is placed, which is said to have been captured in India, and brought as a trophy from Delhi; but this is probably untrue.

Second only to the British Legation in importance is the establishment of the Indo-European Telegraph in Tehran. From the Persian capital to London the Telegraph is a private enterprise; from Tehran through Central and Southern Persia to Bushire and by the Persian Gulf, to Kurrachee and the chief centres of India, the wires belong to the Indian Government. There is an arrangement by which the Shah's Government has the use of a wire in Persia. The maintenance of this Telegraph engages a considerable staff, of which the local director is Major

Murdoch Smith, R.E., who, with much advantage to the British public, has bestowed some of his leisure hours in collecting specimens of the ancient art-work of Persia, with funds provided by the Council of the South Kensington Museum. Many of the articles which are now in the Museum were kindly shown to us by Major Smith in the neighbourhood of Tehran. In the work of the Persian Telegraph he is assisted by a staff of superintendents, inspectors, and clerks, whose health is cared for by three medical men, the chief of whom, Dr. Baker, is resident in Tehran, his two colleagues being placed, one in Ispahan, the other in Shiraz. The testing stations, most of which we visited in passing through Persia, are generally placed about a hundred miles apart, and the chief duty of the clerks at these stations is to correspond at stated hours in morning, afternoon, and evening with the men on duty at the stations on either side, in order to see that no break has occurred in the line, and that all is in good working order. If the connexion is broken, the native horsemen attached to each station are at once sent out to ride along the course of the wires till they reach the fracture. As the break must be known to two stations, the horsemen are sometimes sent out from both, and meet where the repair is needed. The fracture of the wires by design or malice is of very rare occurrence. But they are broken now and then by bullets. Persians are

ambitious of skill in rifle-shooting, and in the plains, where natural targets are scarce, they find in the earthenware insulators of the Telegraph a most inviting object. Sometimes the poles are overthrown by storms of wind, and sometimes the wires are broken and the poles borne down to the ground by the weight of frozen snow which collects in thick icy bands from pole to pole. We were much indebted—as every English traveller by the same path must be—to the Government officers of the Indo-Persian Telegraph.

One of the most interesting persons whom we met with in Tehran was the Rev. Robert Bruce, the only English missionary—in fact, the only English clergyman in Persia. He is stationed at Ispahan, and we accepted an invitation to stay in his house during our visit to that central city of Persia. When we met with Mr. Bruce in Tehran, he was returning from England to his duties in connexion with the Church Missionary Society. In the Persian capital, he was in great request for the baptism of the babies born during the long time which had elapsed since the visit of an English clergyman. An exception to the rule of other Legations, religion is not represented in that of Great Britain.



CHAPTER XIII.

Tehran—Snow in November—Our servant, Kazem—Getting a Takht-i-Rawan—Abd-ullah, the carpenter—Preparing for the road—A Charvodor's "beard"—Black Monday—Trying the Takht-i-Rawan—Loading the caravan—Servant's merchandise—"Zood! Zood!"—Leaving Tehran—The road to Ispahan—Seeing the Khanoum—Shah Abd-ul-Azziz—Moollahs on the road—On to Kinaragird—The Great Salt Desert—Pul-i-delak—A salt river—A Negro dervish—Salt-water soup—A windy lodging.

I WAS slowly recovering from fever—taking quinine, as every one does at some time or other in Persia—when we determined to set out for Ispahan. Already the snow was creeping down the mountains, and seemed, in spite of the noonday sun, to be firmly established for the winter within about two thousand feet of the plain of Tehran. Though the days were hot, the nights were becoming cold.

The first thing was the construction of a takht-i-rawan. Servants brought in reports of takht-i-rawans for sale. A Khan had one to dispose of, in which two of his ladies had just arrived from the sacred city of Meshed. I went to look at it. Through the narrow streets, between brown walls of mud, I followed two of the Khan's servants to the outskirts of Tehran.

In a small yard, surrounded by walls, half of which lay in a dusty heap under the takht-i-rawan, I examined the conveyance. It was coarsely decorated with somewhat indecent figures; it had no windows, was simply a box, like an elongated Saratoga trunk, built on two long poles, and had seen so much service that it was none too strong for a journey of six hundred and fifty miles to Shiraz. The French Secretary of Legation heard of our want. His wife had just arrived from Astrabad in a takht-i-rawan, but the poles of his conveyance were decidedly rotten. It was better to have one made, even though we must leave it, after thirty days' journey, in Shiraz. To travel in a takht-i-rawan from Shiraz to Bushire is well known throughout Persia to be impossible.

Among the servants in the household of Mr. Læssöë was one Kazem, who urged us to engage him for the journey to Bushire, and presented a written character from the Hon. Evelyn Ellis, whom he had accompanied in the same journey two or three years before. Mr. Læssöë very kindly consented, and we at once placed this bright-eyed, active, intelligent little Persian at the head of our arrangements. In all things Kazem did his part well. His first business was to introduce a carpenter, to be instructed in the most improved plan of a takht-i-rawan. Abd-ullah was the carpenter introduced by Kazem. We were told that Kazem was sure to have made an arrange-

ment, after the manner of Persian servants, with Abd-ullah, by which the latter was to give him ten per cent. upon the price. This is no doubt the way in which Persian servants increase their gains; but it does not come to much. The method is well-known, and it is probable Europeans would not obtain articles at a lower price if they purchased for themselves. . The carpenter, though the picture of abject humility as he stood at the edge of our carpet with meekly-folded hands, was a well-dressed man: his turban was of spotless white, his robe of red, his trousers blue. Together we set out to see the takht-i-rawan at the British Legation, which was better than the native carriages in that between the seats it had a well, like that of a European carriage, for the feet, drawers beneath the seats for stores, and glass windows. Abd-ullah looked it carefully over, notched its measurements on a piece of stick, and finally entered into an agreement to make one like it for a specified sum, money to buy food being paid at once.

This is quite usual in all transactions: when he came to the ironwork he wanted money to buy the iron. No tradesman seems to have any capital, but every one has a seal, which after most careful scrutiny of every letter he will affix to agreements and notes of advances. Persians are fond of written agreements, and these seem more common than in England, where no one would think of having an agreement for

so trifling a piece of work. I drew up an agreement in English for the building of the takht-i-rawan ; it was read to Abd-ullah by an interpreter of the Legation, and the carpenter, with many bows, almost prostrations, sealed it, and received part of the sum agreed to be paid for the carriage. He had bound himself to complete the takht-i-rawan in nine days. During this time, we ransacked the bazaars for stores and equipment of all sorts. " You are neither of you strong enough for such a journey," said the good medicine-man of the British in the Persian capital. " The cold snowy blasts are such as you cannot conceive from English experience ; and your lodging will be the most wretched, and exposed to the same temperature, to say nothing of the dangers of the road, especially for you, who have no English-speaking servants, and who cannot talk Persian." We laughed at his fears, and told him we had made some progress in Persian ; could ask for horses, and for any sort of food ; that we had tracings of the route enlarged and marked with the name and distance of every station. At his suggestion, our iron stirrups were covered with thick felt of camels' hair, to prevent the risk of frost in the feet ; and we bought felts, nearly half an inch thick, to nail up in the doorways of the unprotected hovels in which we must sleep. Among a score of other things, Kazem strongly recommended a bag of picked and broken walnuts mixed with

green raisins. We had double counterpanes, thickly lined with cotton wool. Our kind friends, Mr. and Mrs. Læssøe ordered the baking of half-a-dozen large loaves of bread in English fashion; and when the takht-i-rawan was built, we sent to the bazaar for a muleteer. Up came a man seated on a leggy little chestnut horse—a “yaboo,” as these much-enduring and surefooted animals are called. This is the special name for the horse of a charvodar; sometimes it carries a traveller, sometimes the muleteer himself, and at other times it bears a load of goods, and with jingling bells attached to every part of its harness, gaily leads the caravan. This charvodar was a short old man, with sunken eyes and gloomy fanatical aspect. His beard, his hands, and his feet were dyed deep red with khenna. He hitched his waistbelt of camels’ hair rope, straightened his long, loose robe of blue cotton, and salaamed, when he saw us standing in the doorway. He sat on his “yaboo” inside the door while we discussed the proposed journey. “The Sahib wants to go to Ispahan?” said our friend. “Inshallah” (“By the will of Allah”) was the reply of the charvodar. “He wants horses and mules.” “I have horses and twelve mules, but I can load any the Sahib does not want with merchandise.”

At last the price was settled—so many krans for each animal, the two in the takht-i-rawan to be paid for as four; and then came the question of advance

and security. "My beard is in your hands," said the charvodar, meaning that if we advanced money after he had sealed an agreement, we could punish him if he did not go. "No," urged our friend, in the Persian phrase; "the Sahib's beard will be in your hands, and you may go off to Ispahan; leave saddle-bags and cloths as security and then we shall have your beard in our hands." He was sitting on saddle-bags, which he at once threw down as a pledge of service to Kazem. Then as to the time of departure, we declared that we must set out on Monday; but the charvodar said "No," he would not go on Monday. He was quite ready, but it was not a lucky day. He would go on the afternoon of Monday, and put up for the night at Shah Abd-ul-Azim, whose shrine is held sacred by all Persian travellers. But "it was not good," he said, to begin a journey on the morning of Monday, and as we determined to reach Kinaragird—a distance of eight and twenty miles—on the first evening of our journey, we sent him away. Another came—a tall, dark man, with bare, hairy legs showing beneath a short green tunic. He had a skull flattened like that of a wild animal, and a step like a camel, so long, and noiseless, and untiring. Equally inexorable as to Monday, we agreed with this man to start on Tuesday, the twenty-third of November.

The next work was to try the mules in the takht-i-rawan, which was declared on handling it to be a

very heavy one. We had already purchased harness, which for a takht-i-rawan is of peculiar construction, provided with very strong saddle straps and stout hooks of iron, which are passed through rings upon the extremities of the shafts of the carriage. The Persians never lift all together, as European labourers are taught to do, and the consequence is that half-a-dozen men are required to do the work of two. All called loudly on "Allah" as they lifted the points of the front shafts to the back of a mule. The hooking was accomplished with difficulty, while the carriage rested on the iron-shod points of the rear shafts; the second mule was then placed between them, they were lifted and hooked, and the takht-i-rawan was then fairly arranged. But the motion was violent, for the hinder mule resented the position of his face against the back boards of the carriage, and kicked out until I feared the harness would give way. Yet he was compelled to move on, for as his hoofs plunged wildly in the air, he was dragged awkwardly forward by the front mule, who of course knew and could see nothing of his colleague's objection, and soon there was concert and progress. Of course the experiment interested half Tehran, and when the charvodor expressed, in the Persian equivalent, that the mules "went beautiful," which was the declared opinion of Mr. Thomson's servant who was passing, there was a highly enthusiastic and gratified crowd to witness the performance.

Where are all the things to go? I look with dismay at the baggage while we are waiting for the mules at sunrise. The back seat of the takht-i-rawan, to be occupied by my wife, is padded with a wool mattress, which covers the back and sides, and is held in position by straps at the corners; pillows and a rug are used for cushions, and on the opposite seat, the rest of the bedding is secured in cotton bags. But there are bedsteads and boxes, tables and camp-stools, matting and carpets, and a heap of pots and pans. Kazem has been marketing, and has bought half a sheep, a quantity of potatoes (such as in England would be given to pigs), some large onions, huge turnips, coarse carrots, and enormous cabbages. There are besides some mysterious packages, which he confesses are merchandise. He is going to do a little trading on his own account by the way, at our expense as regards his time and as regards the carriage upon the backs of our mules. The extra weight is not great, and his excuses are so well made that we readily forgive him. The practice is very common with Persian servants, and has this advantage, that when it is known to their master they can never grumble about the trouble of loading, nor complain if their seat is not quite comfortable, though to make it uncomfortable would appear difficult, for if they are raised by saddle-bags and bundles to an awkward height above the mule's back, they seem to be just as happy.

The load is well secured, the softest things placed on the top, where the rider sits, his legs swinging on either side with all the regularity of a pendulum.

It is, as I have said, eight and twenty miles from Tehran to Kinaragird, and, travelling as fast as possible—that is three and a half miles an hour—we could hardly get there before sunset. “*Zood! zood!*” “Quick! quick!” we called to the chattering servants and muleteers. At last the takht-i-rawan has received the English lady, who from north to south in Persia is always an object of the deepest interest to the population, and the charvodor, with his abominable whip of iron chain girded round his waist, leads out the first mule by a halter. We straggle after the takht-i-rawan, a string of loaded mules and riders, surrounded with servants, some mounted and others on foot, the servants of the house attending us, in Persian fashion, not only to the door, but for some distance towards the gate of the city. After going with us a few hundred yards, they kiss our hands, accept a present, and depart, salaaming most impressively.

In Persia, travellers by caravan rarely or never set out alone. It is the established rule for some of their friends to accompany them, if only for a little way. It is well at such times to avoid sneezing, or falling, or any other thing which the most superstitious of muleteers can interpret into a bad omen. Sometimes

these men will take days to recover from the saddening effects of a maladroit sneeze. On our path to the Ispahan gate of Tehran, we met a coffin, in a way which, I believe, was not exactly as it should have been. I do not allude to the arrangement of the dead body, which seemed indifferent almost to carelessness. It was enclosed in a long, light box, very much like those in which French eggs are shipped for England, and the whole, covered with white cotton, was slung across the back of a mule, and swung, sometimes high, sometimes low, with the motion of the animal. In some parts of Persia caravans are met with conveying dead bodies to the sacred soil of holy cities for interment. Before the Turkish Government declined to receive such imports, the road from Tehran through Bagdad to Kerbela was much frequented by these mortuary caravans, and the work of embalmment was either imperfect or unattempted, for the smell of these funeral processions is described as having been most horrible.

The gates of Tehran are a reality, and the belated traveller may knock in vain ; but the walls in the direction of Ispahan, as well as in that of Kasveen, are for the most part not walls—nothing but heaps of earth thrown from a trench. The Ispahan gate, like most others, is faced with glazed bricks, coloured blue and yellow, the main structure being surmounted with quaint pinnacles, of no particular shape, which have,

after the manner of all high buildings in Persia, short, thick poles standing out at right angles, the ends built into the brickwork, so as to support a ladder. Looking back at Tehran as we pass through the gate, we can see nothing but dried mud, and all is of the colour of dried mud. The plane trees, still green with lingering leaves, rise over houses of which nothing is seen but the bare, blank walls. If the Persians were African savages, the general aspect of their chief town could hardly be more barbarous and wretched.

There is, of course, no road outside the gate ; there are tracks leading over the plain in every direction. Like most of the Persian plains, that in which Tehran is situated is stony, and in the direction of Ispahan, mules and camels have trodden clear of stones eight or ten, and in some places fifteen or twenty, parallel paths. Into these we turn on leaving the gate, the charvodar leading the front mule of the takht-i-rawan, and one of his assistant gholams bringing up the rear, his chief business being to see that no part of the load of any of the baggage mules falls off and is left in the desert.

Now and then, one of the mules bearing the takht-i-rawan stumbles, and the carriage is shot forward, to the very great discomfort of the occupier. It is common when caravans meet on the plains to indicate by holding up the hand to which side the indicator

will direct his troop, and those whom we met appeared when they reached us to be happy or unsuccessful, according as they passed upon the open or closed side of the *takht-i-rawan*. The desire to see a “feranghi” lady, is, however, always mingled with an evident feeling that prying is both impertinent and improper. An Englishman may do much as he pleases in Persia; he must be very faithless before people will hesitate to take his word as the best security; as much better surety than any fellow-countryman can offer; an Englishman is obeyed and honoured in the same way; but the English lady is a puzzle; the Persian cannot quite comprehend the union of what he acknowledges to be severe propriety with exposure of the charms of face, and with a manner kindly and gracious towards men of all nations.

At noon we are three farsakhs* from Tehran. We have been rising gently, and can still make out one or two coloured domes amid the green trees, an oasis in the desert-like plain we are traversing. Behind the city rise the Elburz Mountains, with snowy summits all along the ridge, from the perpetual white of lofty

* I have spelt this word as it is pronounced. It is sometimes spelt “parasangs”—the Persian measure of distance, varying in our experience from three miles to four. A farsakh is by some who are well acquainted with Persia, held to mean an hour’s journey for a loaded mule, which would account for the farsakhs being shorter in a difficult country than upon the plains.

Demavend to the point where the hills slope to the Karij Palace. All around, indeed, are mountains and hills, glistening with snow or brown with arid surface beneath the glaring sun. The hills are lowest of all before us in the distance, which we must surmount before sunset. On our left, the groves of Tehran seem extended to include the shrine of Shah Abd-ul-Azim, the gilded cupola of which shines brightest of all objects in the landscape. There is a ruined hovel on the plain, which casts a sharp shadow. In this Kazem has already arranged a seat and spread a carpet. The takht-i-rawan is unhooked and lowered, a work which engages every hand, and the mules drink at a stream, which is the justification of this point in the plain as a stopping-place. The muleteers have a luncheon of bread and a poor sort of cream cheese. Kazem produces a bottle of good wine and a cold fowl, which looks as if it had been carried round the world since it was cooked, after a life of semi-starvation. Our horses and mules wander where they will, which is not far, and at the end of half an hour, at a sign from us, the caravan is made up.

Miles before us, when we resume our journey, near the foot of the hills we are approaching, there are black specks like flies on the plain, some twenty or thirty, which are evidently loaded mules. We overtake them at a ruined building, a crumbling caravan-serai, in which they are going to rest for the night.

The mules are carrying two moollahs, their wives, and households; the animals belong to our charvodor, who wishes us to stay under this ruined mud wall, over which lizards are coursing in scores. The accommodation is perhaps as good as we shall meet with at Kinaragird. If this had been our first excursion in Persia, we should have been astonished at the suggestion of such a lodging as this, which was only better than the open plain, inasmuch as there was a ruined wall which, if it had been provided with gates, would have been an enclosure. We had, however, been advised to stay nowhere but in the chapar-khanahs marked upon the chart which Mr. Preece, of the Telegraph Service, had kindly made out for us in Tehran; and therefore determined to push on across the hills to Kinaragird. It was certainly an advantage that we could not fully understand the language in which the charvodor and all our train vigorously expressed their objections. We however refused to give way, and drove the caravan onwards over the brown hills, which were without a sign of vegetation. But afterwards, we had reason to believe that the distance was farther than that marked upon our guide map, and when we looked down from the summit of the hills upon the Salt Desert in which the station at Kinaragird appeared a distant dot, it was gilded with the rays of the setting sun, and in Persia there is no twilight. Just at this moment my horse refused to move, which the char-

vodar explained was owing to the discomfort of the English saddle, to the pressure of which he was unused. I had therefore to walk nearly two farsakhs into Kinaragird, which we did not reach until the moonlight was our only guide upon the border of that immense desert, which extends for hundreds of miles to the confines of Affghanistan. We had entered upon the Great Salt Desert of Persia, which occupies part of the centre and a great portion of the north-east of the country, in which there is no vegetation or good water. We had to cross a corner of this very desolate region, in which we should not see a tree or a blade of grass for days. The surface of this desert is in many places so thickly encrusted with salt that it looks as if there had been a slight fall of snow in these spots; the streams are brackish and unwholesome, neither good for man nor beast. There is no firewood. Our mules carry sufficient for our *pot au feu* until we shall reach the place where in the desert there are a few dried camel thorns, of which some Persian boy will collect a donkey-load for half a kran. At Kinaragird, the water was barely drinkable; the next day it would be worse.

No imaginary picture can exceed the desolation of the scene on any part of the road between Kinaragird and Haus Sultan, our next stopping-place. Not a drop of water for our animals from morning till night; not a shadow in which to escape from the glaring

light. In the morning, the mirage played before us, dividing the mountains from us by the semblance of a lake. To watch the changing forms of this illusion was our only pastime. On the third evening we reached Pul-i-delak, a station like the others, where there was nothing but the chapar-khanah and a caravanserai. At Kinaragird, our bala-khanah had doors, though in these there were holes large enough to put one's hand through; but at Pul-i-delak there were no doors, and when we entered it, every corner of our apartment was visible from the plain. We had to close it up with our hangings of thick felt, but the openings were so numerous that we were forced to borrow empty sacks from the charvodor. From the chapar-khanah, the ground sloped to a stream, of which the waters were yellow as those of the Tiber after a heavy flood, and nauseous with a flavour of sulphur and Epsom salts. The river had once been crossed with a substantial bridge, but now four of the brick arches were broken and ruined, and the roadway severed. Nobody minds. The consequence is that in winter, and whenever there is much water, every caravan has to go about a mile out of the way in leaving or approaching Pul-i-delak up or down the stream to a suitable ford.

At the river, I met one of our gholams bearing a pitcher of this fluid for our consumption, and had no pleasant anticipations of the soup or tea to be made

with it. The moollahs and their party, with one or two other caravans, had arrived at the caravanserai, the door of which I passed in returning to the chaparkhanah. There was a group of Persians lounging about after the day's journey ; they were eating pomegranates, walnuts, and raisins. Two of them advanced towards me, both with the palms of their hands held together before them, as people would do who were trying to carry water without a vessel. One held in this way a small pomegranate, and the other about two dozen raisins, which they presented to me. We entered the caravanserai together ; in the doorway sat a dervish, a negro, ugly and fierce, who at this hour of sunset was proclaiming continually in loud, harsh tones the greatness and the unity of Allah, the all-powerful, the merciful. He spat and cleared himself visibly and most unpolitely from the contamination of my presence ; and when I smiled and bowed, pretending to receive his curses as blessings, his expressions of disgust were violently renewed. Inside, there were the usual scenes and noises ; in two or three arches a clatter and chatter of women and children, hardly concealed by suspended carpets ; in another, half a dozen muleteers sat around the precious blaze of a single log, which warmed their evening mess of bread and sour goat's milk. In the centre, the donkeys brayed, the mules rolled and occasionally fought, all of course carrying their heavy pack-saddles, and

some noisy with the discordant music of suspended bells. In the caravanserai I heard Kazem's cry, "*Sham, Sahib!*" (Dinner, sir!); and wondering how soup made with the water of the Pul-i-delak river would taste, mounted to the bala-khanah.

At nightfall the cold was so great, the wind so piercing, that I had to make excursions in search of big stones to place upon the ends of our doors of camels'-hair cloth. But the wind drove in all directions through our little chamber. If any poor were so lodged in such a night in England, the "boasted civilisation" of our country would be upheld to scorn in journals of "largest" and "world-wide" circulation. But in bed, if one is neither cold nor hungry, the freest ventilation is not often hurtful, and we were encouraged with the prospect of reaching Koom next evening—one of the two holy cities of Persia, to which the shrine of Fatima, sister of the eighth Imām Réza, attracts thousands of faithful Shi'ahs.





CHAPTER XIV.

Koom—Approach to the Holy City—The Golden Dome—Koom Bazaar—The Governor's Procession—The Itizad-el-Dowleh—Mirza Teki Khan—Disgraced by the Shah—Order for his Assassination—The Shah's contrition—A visit to the Governor—A coat of honour—Pipes of ceremony—Mesjid-i-Juma—Tomb of Feth Ali Shah—The shrine of Fatima—A pretended pilgrim—Reception at the mosque—Not allowed to enter—A temperance city—Takht-i-Rawan in Bazaar—The road to Sin-sin—View from the Chapar-khanah.

SOMETIMES in Western lands one is reminded of Oriental scenes. "This is like a bit of India," the retired pro-consul is heard to say in Kent or Surrey. But just as there are some richly verdured scenes, purely English, which cannot be matched, so there are others, always more or less arid, which are purely and entirely Oriental. One never can forget, one will never be reminded in any part of England, of the approach to Koom. The writings of Orientals tell us that the aim of their architecture is harmony with Nature; that their swelling domes and cupolas represent the mountains; their minarets the trees, their roofs the level of the plain. Perhaps in such a comparison of Oriental architecture with Nature, the highest buildings are most especially useful in the landscape;

because they assist the eye to some measure of the vast space which is a chief element of the undoubted beauty of such a scene.

For days we had traversed a plain of unvarying brown, and even the muleteers, to whose untiring tread all ground seems alike, broke into songs as they approached the holy city. “*Manzil, manz-i-i-i-l*” (rest, rest), they chanted, rolling the word in the dirge-like monotone of Persian song from one to the other, from end to end of the caravan. The mules quicken their pace at sight of the green trees, where even they seem to know that the thirst of days may be quenched in sweet waters.

The golden dome which covers the remains of the Imām’s sister, shines the central point of the scene. The town lies flat on the plain, but it is set like a gem in a wide surrounding of hills. To the right, as we approach, the hills appear red, not with passing sunlight, but with natural colour, and behind the town, high above its domes and gardens, are mountains, literally of all colours—snowy at their highest, red and green at their lowest ranges. Nearer, the scene is still more interesting. In the outskirts of the town there is a pyramid fifty feet high, the outer surface resplendent with blue-glazed bricks. This is the tomb of Feth Ali Shah, and it is only one of many curious monuments in Koom. Nearer still, and much of the beauty has suddenly vanished. We are

amid the realities of ruined walls of mud-brick ; we are enveloped in dust ; the miserable bala-khanah, with blackened walls and broken doors, is before our eyes, and we are on the edge of the river—the cloaca of Koom.

We were prepared to stay two nights in the holy city, and it is worth while to nail towels over the holes in the doors, and to "glaze" the windows with linen, so that within we may have a little light and less wind. While this is being done, we have sent a servant to the Governor with a letter from the Sipar Salar, or Grand Vizier, as Mirza Houssein Khan is sometimes styled.

As usual, I perform my evening toilet upon the open roof of the stables, protected from observation from without by the mud parapet. From this elevation I can look down into the shallow river and across the bridge where the road passes at once into the shade of the bazaar. This is the main thoroughfare connecting the two capitals of Persia, and to pass with a horse or a camel through the bazaar of Koom in the busiest hours of the day is no easy matter. But it has to be done, and in the doing of it, without doubt or question, the weakest will go to the wall. That is the way in Persia. An unprotected woman, or a peasant driving a bargain, or his donkey, such are pushed away by the servants of some great man, tumbled over on to the fruit or cotton stalls bordering

the narrow path, which, in front of many of the shops, especially those in which cotton prints are sold, is further contracted by one or two high stools on which purchasers may sit through the slow process of settling the price of their bargains. As a rule, the shopkeepers are silent, but the place is full of noise. A dervish clad in white, his face encircled with long black hair, screams eulogies of Houssein, supposed to be peculiarly acceptable when the Mohurrem is drawing near. A half-naked peasant rattles his scales and shouts aloud the praises of his grapes; a water-seller clashes brass cups together, the noisy exhibition of his vocation; and beggars clamour for relief in the hoarse voices of age and the treble of childhood.

I have sent word to the Governor that I will follow the Grand Vizier's letter immediately. The bazaar is intricate, but our servants are very intelligent, and I am soon at the entrance to his residence. It is a small brick arch through which two men could not easily walk abreast; the way is cumbered with dust and ruin; at about fifty feet from the outer door there is a rectangular turning into a small yard which is heaped with broken mud-bricks over which the path mounts and falls. I was making my way through these miserable precincts of the Governor's palace, when a man entered on the scene evidently the herald of a procession. He was silver stick in waiting, and bore a large staff topped with heavy

ornaments of silver. I stood aside in the ruined yard. The superior servants and secretaries, followed him, two and two, after the manner of our stage in Shakesperian revivals. At last appeared the Governor himself, dressed in a gold-braided robe of cashmere. He was a young man with an appearance of great refinement and of feeble health. We exchanged salaams, and I gathered from his Highness's Persian that he had just sent servants to the chapar-khanah with orders to present his salaam, and to say that he would be happy to receive me the next morning "two hours after the sun."

In Persia, all time has reference to sunrise. Caravans start two, three, or four hours "before the sun," and visits of ceremony are frequently paid, as the Governor of Koom proposed in my case, two or three hours after sunrise. I joined his Highness in the procession and walked beside him to the gate, where, as is usual before the houses of the great, there sat a dervish, a man of wildest aspect, with long black hair falling upon his shoulders. He was dressed in white, from turban to his bare feet. He shouted "Allah-hu," while the Governor's procession was passing, and scowled at me with most obvious disgust, appearing extremely offended at the civility with which the Prince Governor shook hands and expressed his hope of seeing me in the morning.

The Governor of Koom is a great personage, to

whom the Shah has given the title of Itizad-el-Dowleh (the Grandeur of the State). He is married to the eldest daughter of his Majesty, the Princess Fekhrul' Mulook. Her Highness has also a title from her Imperial father—she is addressed as “the Pomp of the State.” It is easy to see that the Itizad-el-Dowleh has neither vigour, energy, nor ability, and that the advantages of his natural good breeding are wasted by excesses, such as Persian *viveurs* most delight in. He owes his position, his title, and his wife, to the contrition of the present Shah for having consented to the murderous execution of his father, the Mirza Teki Khan, the great Ameer-el-Nizam, whose conduct as Commander-in-chief of the army and acting Grand Vizier, in the early part of his Majesty's reign, is referred to by Persians with unbounded pride and satisfaction. They speak of Teki Khan as having been honest, as having had no itching palm for public money or for private bribes—a political phenomenon, therefore, in their eyes. The handsomest and largest caravanserai in Tehran is, as I have said, named after him, and over the Ameer's tomb in that city, the repentant Shah has built a structure, the blue dome of which is one of the most prominent features in the general aspect of Tehran.

In his high station, he was of course the object of jealousy and hatred; enemies intrigued against him, and represented to the young Shah that Teki Khan

not only held himself to be greatest in the Empire, but that the Ameer-el-Nizam boasted of his personal security as guaranteed by the Tsar of all the Russias. The Shah listened unwillingly, for Teki Khan was high in favour and repute, and was his Majesty's brother-in-law, having been recently married to a sister of the King of Kings. But Nazr-ed-deen was versed in the traditions of his house; all men say he is a true Kajar, and his dynasty won and has retained power by killing, or rendering impotent, by blinding or maiming, any who are suspected of rivalry.

Teki Khan was disgraced and sent away from the sight of "the Shadow of God;" but it was long before the Shah would consent to his being put to death. Day after day, his enemies urged that he should be disposed of, and suggested the sending of assassins to the country palace near Kashan, in which he and the princess his wife were living, with orders to kill him in his own apartments. The Shah hesitated; he had some affection for his sister, who was devotedly attached to her distinguished husband. The princess believed that Teki Khan's life was in danger, and never quitted his side, knowing that her presence was his chief security. At last, his enemies spread a report that the Tsar intended to interfere and to obtain from the Shah an assurance of the safety of the Ameer. The plot was now successful. The Shah was told that the Russian Envoy was about to demand

that the person of Teki Khan should be inviolable, and it was artfully represented that this would render the Shah contemptible in the eyes of his subjects, who in their anger would probably depose or murder himself. He was persuaded to give his consent to the immediate assassination of Teki Khan, in order that his death might be accomplished before the Russian Envoy applied for audience.

The Shah gave way, and the murderers set out with glee to take the life of the ex-Minister who had been so great a benefactor to his country. Their only remaining difficulty was in detaching the princess from Teki Khan, and this they accomplished by stratagem, representing themselves as bearers of returning favour from the Shah. Teki Khan received them alone, expecting to hear that his Imperial master was once more his friend. But he was quickly undeceived. Yet these emissaries of the "Shadow of God" were no hireling assassins, anxious to finish their job with fatal dagger in the quickest possible manner. They were men who had come, with true Persian cruelty, to enjoy personal and political revenge in watching the long-drawn agonies of their victim. They seized and stripped Teki Khan, cut the arteries of his arms, and then stood by and beheld with gloating his encounter with death.

Time quickly brought the truth to light, and the Shah felt guilty of the murder of the noblest of his

subjects. His Majesty had two daughters ; his sister, the widow of the Ameer, had two sons. The four children were betrothed in marriage, and the penitent Sovereign pledged himself to regard the welfare of the boys he had made fatherless. So it happened that the elder had become his Majesty's son-in-law, and Governor of Koom, with power to keep for himself the surplus of the results of taxation, after paying into the Imperial treasury the sum at which the province of Koom is assessed to the revenues of the State.

On the morning after I had seen his Highness, at "one hour after the sun," which at that season was eight o'clock, I heard a noise of arrival, and stepped out from the mud hovel, which was our only apartment, on to the wide roof of the stables of the chapar-khanah. Four of the Governor's servants, splendid in costume and armoury, had arrived to be my escort to the palace. Our way led through the crowded bazaar, and the servants, who marched before me, did all possible honour to the occasion by the most offensive rudeness to the people. I threatened to lead the way myself if they did not cease from pushing the women and men alike aside, sometimes knocking them down upon the traders' stalls in their zeal to exhibit the importance of their master and of his visitor.

No one complained, and in no case was there apparent even a disposition to return their blows, for

the violent manner in which they pushed and drove the people with their sticks frequently amounted to assault. "Away, sons of a burnt father!" "Away, sons of dogs!" they cried, belabouring the camels and asses, which were slow to perceive the necessity of clearing the centre of the path for our passage. There may be some alleys in the East-end of London with entries as mean and dirty as that of the palace of the Itizad-el-Dowleh. But then in London the path is not choked, as it was at Koom, with bits of sun-baked clay, and with heaps of dust, contributed in part from the breaking up of the mud cement with which the walls are plastered.

The white-clad dervish spat with unconcealed disdain as I entered, and on emerging from the passage into a courtyard, in which were placed a square tank and a few shrubs, there was a crowd of about thirty servants and hangers-on, who bowed with that air of grave devotion which is a charm of Persian manner, and followed towards the mud-built house, a single storey high, which bounded the courtyard on the further side. The rooms of Persian houses very rarely have doors, and a curtain of Manchester cotton, printed in imitation of a Cashmere pattern, was hung over the doorway of the Itizad-el-Dowleh's reception-room, which was not more than fifteen feet square.

His Highness looked very uncomfortable in his coat of honour, which, I believe, was a present from his

Imperial father-in-law. It is common in Persia for the sovereign to send a coat when he wishes to bestow a mark of favour, and of course if the garment has been worn by the "Shadow of God," the value of the present is greatly enhanced. The state coat of the Itizad-el-Dowleh was made from a Cashmere shawl, of which the ground was white. The shape was something like a frock-coat, except that it had no collar, and the waist was bunched up in gathers, which gives, even to well-made men, an awkward and clumsy appearance. It was lined throughout with grey fur, resembling chinchilla. Upon his head, he wore the usual high black hat of Astrakhan fur. His black trousers were wide and short, after the Persian manner, allowing an ample display of his coarse white socks and shoes. He rose from an arm-chair which had probably formed part of the camp equipage of a Russian officer, and on his left hand there were ranged three similar chairs—folding-chairs, with seats of Russian leather. The walls and ceiling were whitewashed, and the floor, as is usual, covered with the beautiful carpets of the country. The Governor's chair and mine were placed on a small Austrian rug, which was probably valued for its glaring stripes of green and white, the further corners of it were held down by glass weights, on the under side of which were photographic portraits of the Emperor Napoleon III. and of the Empress Eugénie.

The Itizad-el-Dowleh could speak a few words of French, and understand simple phrases in that language ; but he had never been in Europe. While we were exchanging civilities in French, two servants were brewing tea upon the floor with a steaming samovar. The infusion was sweetened in the pot, for Persians are of one mind in the matter of sugar, and invariably like as much as the water will hold without ceasing to be fluid—that which chemists call a saturated solution. The tea was served on metal trays of Persian design, in pretty cups of French porcelain, with lemons cut in halves ; and afterwards pipes were brought in, the live charcoal which was laid upon the damp tobacco being blown occasionally by the servants until the tube reached the mouth of the smoker. I refused, and the jewelled mouthpiece of the flexible tube was then presented to the Governor, the water bowl of the kalian being held by a slave, while his Highness languidly inhaled the smoke.

I am sure that my dislike for tobacco was not unwelcome to any one of the grandes of Persia. To a true Mussulman, it is very disagreeable to place in his mouth the tube which has just quitted the lips of an infidel, and I have heard of Persians of rank being provided with a double mouthpiece, so that, after fulfilling the hospitable duty of presenting the pipe to a Christian guest, they could unobserved slip off the piece from which he had drawn the smoke, and enjoy

the second without defilement. The feeling which leads English people to wipe the brim of the loving-cup before passing the goblet to a neighbour has no place in the Persian mind. The Governor knows perfectly well that the pipe from which he draws a few puffs of smoke will be finished by his servants; and indeed a kalian is always tried after it is lighted by the pipe-bearer, who, if necessary, keeps it alight by smoking until his master is ready for it. The pipe is always followed by black coffee, thick, strong, and sweet, the quantity served to each person never exceeding the medical dose of "two tablespoonfuls," in china cups without handles, which, in the houses of the great, are usually secured in metal egg cups of gold or silver, studded with turquoises and garnets. After the coffee one looks for leave to go—to obtain permission to retire, a word which, in Persia, is always supposed to be given by the greater person, whether the visitor or the visited.

In Persian fashion, the Governor placed himself, and all his power at my disposal; but I found it impossible to make him understand that at the suggestion of Mr. Ronald Thomson, the very able secretary of the British Legation in Tehran, I wished to see as much as could be permitted of the sacred buildings of Koom. We sent for the clerk of the Indian Government Telegraph, which has a testing station in Koom; and with his help it was arranged that the

Itizad-el-Dowleh's servants should take me to the Mesjid-i-Juma, the oldest mosque in Koom, to the tomb of Feth Ali Shah, and that I should enter the doorway of the golden-domed mosque of Fatima, and look upon, for it could not be expected that an infidel should approach, the shrine of that sacred sister of the most holy Imām Réza.

The two servants who were appointed to lead this excursion looked as if they had been chosen for their strength; they were two of the largest, most powerful men I had seen in Persia. The Mesjid or mosque of Juma was very like the mosque of Kasveen, but rather more decayed and dilapidated; and from this we passed quickly to the tomb of Feth Ali Shah, which was in the outskirts of the town. The tomb is a parallelogram, in shape like many which were erected in English churchyards a hundred years ago. It is a simple structure of brick, covered with very beautiful tiles, with brown letters raised in high relief on a ground of blue, not much unlike the samples of this work which have been procured for the South Kensington Museum by Major Smith. Over the tomb there is a small building, or mosque.

From the resting-place of Feth Ali Shah, I returned through the centre of the town towards the grand mosque containing the shrine of Fatima. I expected difficulty there. Koom is renowned throughout Persia for devotion to Islam, and for hatred of

infidels. Not long ago an Armenian doctor was in imminent danger, from the fact that he, a Christian, had entered this mosque in disguise. It appears that he had in this way been successful in seeing the Caaba at Mecca; and this success had, no doubt, made him contemptuous as to danger from the fanaticism of Persia. Clothed as a pilgrim, he had entered the mosque we were approaching; and having seen the shrine of Fatima, was leaving the building. He met with a moollah in the doorway, and could not refrain from boasting of his success. "There is not much to see here," he said, and compared it with Mecca. The priest's suspicions were aroused; he told the bystanders that he believed the sanctuary had been violated by a Christian, who had committed the graver offence at Mecca. The anger of the people grew hot and hotter by talking together; and at last a crowd rushed down to the chapar-khanah, where the pretended Moslem was staying, in the mud hovel which we occupied during our stay in Koom. He was warned just in time to save his life by flight over the back wall of the post-house.

My appearance in the courtyard of the mosque caused great excitement. Along the sides of the enclosure, which is nearly half an acre in extent, there are seats, upon which idlers of the "Softa" class, and beggars, with no pretensions to learning, but with abundant fanaticism, were sitting. Most of

them rose at the sight of my procession, which was making directly for the main door of the mosque. In the centre was the usual tank, around which were ranged a few shrubs in wooden boxes; the golden dome of the mosque rose glittering and grand in the foreground. In the doorway hung a heavy chain, festooned in such a manner that none could enter without a lowly bending of the head; and behind this stood a black-bearded moollah, wearing a huge turban of green—the sacred colour—and next him, I recognised, with a sense of coming defeat, the wild-looking dervish who had cursed and frowned at me from the doorway of the Governor's palace. His face now wore an expression really terrible.

The two gigantic servants of the Itizad-el-Dowleh, who led the way, mounted the steps, and standing outside the chain, informed the priest that it was the Governor's wish that I should be allowed to enter so far as to be able to see the shrine and the surrounding tombs. The moollah replied with an angry negative, and the dervish supported him with wild gesticulations. The servants pushed forward, evidently thinking that I should demand the fulfilment of their master's order. But to force a passage appeared to me not only very dangerous and unjustifiable, but from all that we had seen of Persian mosques and shrines, I doubted if the contents of this mosque were sufficiently interesting to warrant the slightest

risk or disturbance. Clearly too, the moollahs were stronger in this matter than the Governor; already a crowd watched the altercation, and every man in it could be relied on to support the moollahs, while in the crowded bazaar close at hand they had a reserve of force willing and eager to do the work of fanaticism —a force which could destroy any other power in Koom. I ordered a retreat, and lest the servants should not understand my words, beckoned them to quit the doorway. Fortunately I had learnt to beckon in the Persian manner. I had noticed that when I held up my hand and waved it towards my face in the European way, our servants did not understand this direction. The hand must be turned downwards and the waving done with the wrist uppermost. This was the sign I made in the courtyard of the mosque at Koom. Our position in recrossing the long court-yard was not very enviable; in Persia the vanquished are always contemptible, but there were no unpleasant manifestations.

In Koom, we found it impossible to refill our empty wine bottles. Something stronger than the Maine Liquor Law prevails in this sacred city and in that of Meshed, where the brother of Fatima is buried. Intoxicating liquors appear to be absolutely unattainable, and intoxication is accomplished by those who desire that condition with bhang or opium. That which can be purchased anywhere in Koom, cheaper

and of better quality and manufacture than elsewhere in Persia, is pottery, for which the town is famous. The water-bottles of Koom are seen all over Persia. The clay, when baked, is fine, hard, and nearly white, and the potters have a speciality in the way of decoration. They stud the outside of their bottles with spots of vitrified blue, like turquoises, in patterns varied with yellow spots of the same character. The effect is very pleasing. In the bazaar of Koom, we bought three delicious melons, each about a foot in diameter, for a kran, the value of tenpence in English money.

The muezzin was shouting "*Allahu akbar*," and the call to the daybreak prayer, when our caravan set out for Pasangan, the next station south of Koom. There is difficulty, as we afterwards found, in the passage of a ship of three thousand tons burden through the Suez Canal; but there is much greater difficulty in passing a takht-i-rawan through the bazaar at Koom at about seven o'clock in the morning. What with the opposing stream of traffic and the anxiety of all to see the English *khanoum*, the operation was most difficult. After enduring many collisions with loaded camels, and mules, and donkeys, we escaped from the crowd of black hats and brown hats, green turbans and white turbans, and were once more in the open plain, where the only variety occurred in the fording of watercourses which crossed the path between artificial banks raised for the purpose of irrigation.

We thought we had never beheld a more lovely sunrise than that in the faint light of which we left the chapar-khanah of Pasangan. Above, yet near to the horizon, having a clear space beneath it, there hung a dense dark cloud. In a moment this was infused with rose-colour, then it became a floating mass of gold, increasing in splendour until the arisen sun passed behind it, and over all was gloom. Through the day we rode across the dusty plain to Sin-sin, a mud-built chapar-khanah and caravanserai, so entirely the colour of the plain that it was difficult, when there was no shadow, to see the buildings before we were close to the walls. When the usual operations of sweeping out the bala-khanah and covering the doors and windows with hangings, had been performed, the carpets laid, our beds set up and made, the table spread for dinner, I sat as usual on the roof, avoiding the smoke-holes. Through the clouds rising in one of these holes, I could see Kazem tending his stew-pots in an atmosphere dense with smoke, and unendurable to any but those who are accustomed to sit on the ground. Outside, the scene was, as always, charming; as always of magnificent extent, and as invariably bounded on every side by mountains. In the plain, towards the town of Kashan a few patches of softest green, the wheat crop of next year, was the only vegetation. Before us, distant two days' march, lay the snowy outline of the highest mountain pass in

Central Persia. Cold and clear in the fading sunlight, it seemed very near, and the black serrated outline of the lower ranges against the silver sky, gave that aspect to the landscape which, while it fills the mind with melancholy, is accepted as most beautiful.





CHAPTER XV.

Kashan—Visit to the Governor—Kashan bazaar—The Governor's house—The Governor on railways—Tea, pipes, and sherbet—A ride round Kashan—A house pulled down—Present from the Governor—Presents from servants—Manna—Leaving Kashan—Gabrabad—Up the mountains—A robber haunt—Kuhrud—In the snow—A Persian interior—A welcome visitor—Kazem as a cook—The Takht-i-Rawan frozen—Pass of Kuhrud—Soh—“The Blue Man”—Beauties of the road—Province of Ispahan—Moot-i-Khoor—Ispahan melons—Village of Gez.

EARLY in the morning of the last day in November, we left Sin-sin, and rode towards Kashan, which lies beneath high mountains. About two in the afternoon we arrived in the courtyard of the Telegraph Office, where Mr. Nicolai, an Armenian, gave us hospitable welcome. His house, extraordinary as a building having a second storey, though the upper floor was so ruined that no part was habitable, stands at the commencement of the town, beside a broad road, horribly rough as to pavement, within a hundred yards of the entrance to the bazaar. No picture could give an adequate conception of the appearance of such a town as Kashan. There are hovels in the County Meath hardly more comfortable, though far less

roomy, than the flat, square boxes, plastered with mud and broken straw, in which the Persians dwell. But in Western countries, the roofs of the houses give variety of outline and of tint ; in a town like Kashan all is of the dusty colour of the road.

Immediately upon our arrival, we sent a servant at once to the *Hakem*, or Governor, with a letter of recommendation from the Grand Vizier ; and very soon an answer was returned that the Governor was waiting to receive me. Two led horses and five servants followed the Governor's letter, and mounting one I gave the other to Mr. Nicolai, who was kindly willing to act as interpreter in my interview with the Governor of Kashan.

The town is famous for saucepans and scorpions. A hundred wooden hammers were ringing upon as many copper pots and pans when we entered the bazaar, the Governor's five servants clearing the way in the usual unceremonious fashion. The brass and copper work of Kashan is useful rather than ornamental. Some of the pans and kettles are engraved with rude ornament ; but although this is the Birmingham of Persia, there is no lavish bestowal of labour on any of the productions of Kashan—no elegances in metal work, such as may be purchased in Ispahan or Benares. The bazaar of Kashan has a vaulted roof of stone, from which the noise of the saucepan-makers resounded so loudly that conversation

was impossible. Other alleys were devoted to more quiet industries. In the East, the carpenters and turners make no small use of their toes. Being always barefooted when at work, and seated either on the ground or upon the level platform of a stall or shop in the bazaars, they from childhood accustom their toes to such motions and functions as European fingers are wont to undertake, and in bowing or ginning cotton, in turning, or in carpentry, the toes often do the work of a third hand.

The life of Eastern tradesmen, especially of those engaged in the comparatively inert occupations of selling groceries or manufactured cottons, must be very unwholesome. They spend their days for the most part seated in the perpetual gloom of the sunless bazaars, which are icy cold in winter, and through which draughts of chilling air are always blowing ; their only fire is a pan of charcoal, upon which they sometimes sit, when it is covered with a perforated box. At other times, two or three may be seen crowding together to warm their hands over this lifeless fire. Very many sleep in their shops, and never see the sunlight except in the morning, or mid-day, or evening walk to the mosque, the courtyard of which is usually entered from the bazaars. Bread and fruit are their ordinary food ; the kalian their solace and diversion. They dread none so much as the servants of the Governor, who are the instruments of extortion

and oppression in the name and with the authority of the State.

One could see all this in the swaggering, bullying manner of those who were leading me to the Governor's house, which was of the usual character. Near the mud-plastered entrance, I saw two black slaves running, each with a chair held high above his head, and knew, immediately, that these were being "requisitioned" for the interview. About twenty servants received me at the door, and made a sort of procession through the customary covered way into the customary courtyard, with the regulation tank and shrubs; and as many as could get there, including our own servants, crowded into the little room, about twelve feet square, in which sat the ruler of the province of Kashan, a man of very high and rare repute for justice and public honesty—a sickly, ascetic looking person, dressed in a long robe of dark Cashmere, who rose from his chair, laid his hand upon the front of his high black hat, and bowed with grave dignity in reply to my "salaam." At his feet on the floor, with hospitable intent, was placed a tray with cups and saucers, and a steaming samovar, the fire of which was occasionally blown by a squatting attendant.

In opening a conversation at a formal interview of this sort in Persia, it is always expected not merely by the great officer himself, but by all who with open ears stand around, that some compliment—the more

high-flown the better—will be given and repaid. To any travelling Englishman who is well recommended, the Governor will be likely to say that he is proud to entertain one of the most noble and exalted men of the English nation, the friend of his master the Shah; and the Englishman, mindful that with this man formality is everything, must do his best to combine truth with flattery in his reply. Reminded probably by the appearance of an Englishman, of Baron Reuter and his proposed railways, the Governor proceeded to remark, very languidly, that a railway would be a good thing, and would make travelling more pleasant for persons like myself. I do not think he had the faintest idea what a railway was like, or he would probably have regarded it in relation to the country and to the Persians. He seemed to think that a railway was something in which Englishmen liked to travel—something which peculiarly belonged to them. No doubt in his heart he looked upon a railway as a machinery for bringing Englishmen into countries where they were not wanted, and which they would not leave if once introduced by this mysterious and mechanical steam caravan.

Mr. Nicolai remarked that there had been a band of robbers on the mountains between Kashan and Ispahan, and suggested that the Governor should furnish us with a guard of soldiers. He said that he believed the road was safe now, but that he

should wish to give us a guard ; that he would order some soldiers to accompany our caravan across the mountains to the next Telegraph station at Soh. Meanwhile, the ordinary entertainment was proceeding ; the sweet tea had been duly served ; then pipes ; then sherbet, with ice and sweetmeats ; lastly, coffee. The Governor, according to the strict etiquette of Mahomedan countries, made no inquiry for my companion ; to allude directly to a visitor's wife would be an excess of impropriety. His Excellency was sorry, so he said, that I intended to leave Kashan the next morning. He had hoped that he might himself have shown me some of the interesting sights (there were none) of the town ; but he thought that at least I should do well to ride through the streets of Kashan, and he would send mounted servants as a guard of honour.

In a Persian town, few of the streets have a greater width than ten or twelve feet, and the way is generally encumbered with a dirty watercourse (worn more or less deep according to the elevation of the ground), and with stray bricks and stones from the ruins of houses. There is no town in Persia in which there are not probably as many houses in this condition as there are houses which are inhabited. But at the corner of two streets, I saw in my ride through Kashan, a house which looked as if it had been suddenly tumbled by earthquake into ruin ; and this, I

was informed, had recently been thrown down by order of the Governor. It had been a house of ill-fame, and had in this way been punished for its sins.

After a ride round the town, I arrived at the Telegraph office, and dismissed, with *pishkish* (the equivalent for backshish) the large retinue with which the Governor's courtesy had provided me. In half an hour, another procession approached from the Governor's palace. His major-domo led the way—a tall Persian, whose beard, dyed blue-black with indigo, descended near the scarlet girdle of his waist. This man was followed by two black slaves, in white tunics and turbans, each of whom carried on his head a circular metal tray, about a yard in diameter, on one of which there were six plates piled high with fruit, apples, pears, pomegranates, dried apricots, figs, and oranges, and on the other, sweetmeats in an equal number of plates. This was the Governor's present, and by far the best part of it was the picturesque appearance of the bearers, a complete realisation of a scene in the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments." The slaves laid the huge trays at my feet, and according to custom all held out their hands for money. Whenever a Governor makes a present, which is regarded as doing great honour to the receiver, nothing less than ten krans will satisfy the servants. About eighteen months ago an Englishman who had an appointment in Persia, arrived in one of the principal towns and

received a present of this sort from the Governor. He gave liberal *pishkish*, and two days afterwards there arrived another present; he gave more largesse; again, another present came, and another, until his suspicions were awakened, and he discovered that none but the first had come from the Governor; that the servants of his Highness had purchased and presented the succeeding presents for the sake of obtaining his more valuable gifts. It is quite probable, it is quite in keeping with the general conduct of affairs in Persia that the Governor should obtain his servants at a cheaper rate than others, upon the implied, if not expressed understanding that they are to make what they can by oppression of the people and by looking for presents in every direction. Of the dozen earthenware plates on the two trays, we noticed that most were of the familiar "willow pattern." In each, there was a red paper with edges cut ornamentally, and on this was placed the fruit or sweetmeat. Of the latter, one plate was filled with small circular cakes of manna. We met with this very nice sweetmeat in other towns, but nowhere so good as that we received from the Governor of Kashan. The manna is found, in appearance like dew, upon the leaves of the tamarisk (*gez*, Persian; *athl*, Arabic) plant, and is collected in the morning with the utmost care. The ground beneath the bushes is swept clean, and a cotton cloth spread under the branches. These are then shaken, and the

manna collected and made with sugar or honey and flour into circular cakes about two inches in diameter and half an inch thick. Split almonds are sometimes set in the sweetmeat before it is baked.

It was warm in Kashan, except during the night, at the end of November. In summer this is one of the hottest places in Persia. Scorpions gambol in the dust. The Telegraph clerk said that in summer he had burnt his hand by merely touching a bottle which had for some time been exposed to the sun. When our caravan left Kashan in the morning before sunrise, we had the prospect of passing in our day's ride, from this climate, by an elevation of nearly five thousand feet, into the snows of Kuhrud, a village which gives its name to the highest pass and to the highest chapar-khanah in Persia. In the grey dawn, we rode through the quiet town. As in no Persian house, except in the exceedingly rare case of a second storey, is there a window visible from outside; no house gives light or sign of life, and the way was very dark and crooked beyond description. After passing about half a dozen corners, I saw some horsemen standing in the roadway. There was only just light enough to see them in the obscurity of the walled street. Their "Salaam Sahib!" as I approached, suggested the fact that they were the escort promised by the Governor. They proved the best guard we had in Persia—handy, docile men, strong and quick.

ready to lift the takht-i-rawan to the mules' backs, or to dart away over the plains if there was a chance of securing a partridge, a wild duck, or an antelope.

Outside Kashan, we at once entered upon a brown, pebbly slope, which extended in a gentle gradient for fourteen miles to where the mountains rose abruptly to the snow, which lay white and deep upon the summit of the pass. For hours, we toiled up this bare and barren slope, and before we entered the mountains, turned to enjoy the extensive, interesting view over the plain of Kashan, in which the brown flats of the town would have been hardly visible but for the trees and the few domes and minarets marking the position of a community which is regarded by Persians as immensely busy and prosperous on account of the trade in hand-made pots and pans. About noon we arrived at Gabrabad, a ruined caravanserai, a notorious hiding-place for robbers. It was then so cold that we were glad to find a sunny spot among the ruins on which to sit and eat our luncheon—a fried cutlet of kid, which was a failure, and an omelette, in the manufacture of which Kazem was an expert.

From Gabrabad, for six or seven miles, we mounted the course of a rapidly descending stream. The lady of the takht-i-rawan had in this part of the journey a most uneasy ride, for we crossed the purling stream more than twenty times, and the front mule slid down and scrambled up the banks, dragging the hind mule

after him, with no regard for the level of the takht-i-rawan, the shafts of which were sometimes nearly in the ground at one end or the other. In such a country, it is not easy with baggage mules to make three miles an hour, and our pace hardly equalled that.

The mountains rose darkly on either side up to the line of snow which we were approaching. No robber band could desire a more eligible field for operations. The stream of melted snow was a zigzag among hills, any one of which would have concealed a large force, and Kazem made the way more agreeable by riding up to me and saying half in Persian (the words "good" and "bad" in Persian have very much the same sound as in English), half in English, "*bad, bad, robbers;*" meaning, as he swept his hand around the landscape from east to west, that the country had a most evil reputation in this particular place for insecurity. But we were fortunate, and the cold season was all in our favour. From November to April, on the high lands of Persia, caravans are rarely attacked.

As we drew near the top of the mountain, the country became more open, and when our horses were treading through patches of snow, we were close to one of the best cultivated village lands in Persia. There were well-tilled gardens terraced up the side of the mountain, reminding us of the toilsome industry of Switzerland, and the neatness of the work was not less suggestive of the comparison. The road,

for there was now a road between the fenced patches of tilled land, passed beneath overhanging boughs of walnut-trees, which in the time of leaf must afford most delicious shade. There were groves of poplar and hazel, giving promise of abundant firewood in this snowy region. The mud-huts seemed stronger and cleaner than those of the plains, and the people more active. One could well understand that these swarthy mountaineers could furnish terrible bands of robbers. In their work, they sprang about from crag to crag, and the mountains echoed with their calls to each other, or to their flocks of small, wiry-haired goats. This village of Kuhrud is said to be peopled by members of the Bakhtieri tribe, an unsubjugated people, feared throughout Persia for their wild and lawless character, and possessed of energy, as displayed in their agriculture at Kuhrud, which is not found among the people who may more truly be called Persians.

I was so charmed with the appearance of the lonely village, so elevated and remote, that in passing the mosque, at the door of which stood the chief moollah of Kuhrud, I ventured to offer congratulations upon the industry of his flock. But his reverence received my advances in a very surly manner, and we passed on to the chapar-khanah, which was placed in a grove of fruit trees. There was only just room between the doorway and a stream descend-

ing from the higher mountains, to place the takht-i-rawan for the night. We were often obliged to display this much of confidence in the honesty of the people, and we never suffered for it. The doors of the chapar-khanahs were rarely wide or high enough to admit the takht-i-rawan, which was therefore of necessity left outside, in a country where it is by no means uncommon to rob doors and window frames for firewood. The tired mules rolled off to a caravanserai which was close at hand, and we entered the post-house, the yard and roof of which were covered with snow and ice. Just inside the strong gates of wood, there was the usual small, dark, cavernous chamber, mud-plastered within and without, lighted only by the narrow doorway, in which of course there was no door, and by a nine-inch circular smoke-hole in the roof. Into this our servants and soldiers carried, as usual, the saddles, bridles, luggage, stores, and cooking utensils. There was the ordinary furniture, that is, a pile of wood-ashes in the centre, and a few large stones from the bed of the stream outside, to be fashioned at the pleasure of the occupiers into a grate.

All chapar-khanahs are more or less alike, and the only peculiarity in this was, that the bala-khanah, the room above the gateway, was smaller than usual. The high steps, with an average rise of eighteen inches, leading from the horseyard to the flat roof of

the stables, on the level of which the bala-khanah is placed, were broken and fearfully slippery. Our servant had swept the snow away, and this had perhaps increased the difficulty of ascent. On the roof, we had to walk through snow to the wretched eyrie in which we were to pass the night. But we thought ourselves in great luck on finding that the fireplace did not smoke very much, and that it was possible to have a fire. The room was so small that when our beds were set up, and our two-feet-six table extended, we found it necessary that one at least should sit on a bed. Wherever on the smoke-stained wall there was a trace of the original whitewash, we could see the scribbling of Persians. Those Persians who can write, are very much given to composition upon the walls of the bala-khanah, and in a country where the renewal of whitewash is rarely if ever thought of, they thus secure for their scribbling the notice of at least a generation.

Comfort, after all, is comparative, and spite of the snow, which lay deep and white up to our doorways, and the cloths of pressed camels' hair, which were all that stood in these wide apertures between us and the inclement night, we began to think ourselves not in very bad circumstances, when the blaze of the logs roared up the narrow chimney, and glowed on the colours of our carpets and our coverlids, which appeared of startling magnificence in a mud hovel so

mean and earthy, with walls and floor like the surface of a country road. The beams of the flat roof were rough unshapen poles, cut from the Kuhrud wood, and laid from wall to wall ; the grass and brushwood upon which the outside roofing of mud was laid, showing between them, with a plentiful hanging of cobwebs ; the whole being nearly black with smoke from the fires of past occupants, who had not cared to clear the chimney before setting light to their wood. This is very necessary ; for, as I have said, in Persia it is a common practice to block the flue with bricks or stones, after the fire has been lighted for some time, and a body of red ashes has been collected.

We were looking for the early arrival of Kazem with the “*soufe*”—which appears to be Persian for soup—when we heard the trot of a horse outside, and a servant announced the arrival of Mr. Bruce, the English missionary, whom we had met in Tehran, and whose guests we were to be in Ispahan. Mr. Bruce has the first and most indispensable qualification for successful life in Persia—he is a good and a bold rider. When he lifted our camels’ hair door, we were sorry to see that his arm was in a sling, and his face badly wounded. His horse had fallen on a stony slope, and he was much bruised. The missionary was dressed as Europeans generally dress on the road : he wore high riding-boots with spurs,

and breeches, a strong short coat, with a leather waist-belt, and a wide-awake, with a "puggree," or turban of white muslin. We were delighted to see him. Kazem soon produced a saucepan—our only tureen—half full of nearly boiling soup. Any other mode of bringing it to the table would have involved failure in the icy atmosphere through which he had to pass. A chicken and rice came next; and Kazem, to my surprise, declared that he had cutlets of mutton "quite ready," and an omelette "to follow." He had accomplished all this, including potatoes, with nothing but three big stones for his fireplace. His dark eyes glowed with pride as he produced the unlooked-for cutlets and the omelette. Like all Persian servants, he felt it a matter of honour, when a guest arrived, to have plenty of dinner, and would have thought nothing of "requisitioning" mutton or eggs in the village or caravanserai.

Mr. Bruce was "chaparing down"—in Anglo-Persian phrase—to Ispahan, riding fifty to seventy miles a day. People travelling "caravan," as we were, would take more than three times as long as he on the road between Tehran and Ispahan. He had no luggage except a small bundle, wrapped in a waterproof sheet, and carried on his saddle; this included a bag which, when he stopped for the night at a chapar-khanah, was stuffed with straw, and formed the usual bed of Europeans, who wish to "chapar"

quickly through the country. The chapar horse he had ridden from the last post-house, and that of the attendant, were put up at Kuhrud for the night, and would return in the morning. How merry we were, laughing at the dessert served in dishes of paper ; at the service of cups for wine ; and at the missionary's amusing stories of his life in Affghanistan and Persia !

It was bitterly cold an hour before sunrise, when we, in our warm beds, heard Mr. Bruce setting off for Ispahan, his horse's hoofs clattering on the hard frozen ground. The morning light showed the imperfections of our door ; and from my pillow, I had an uninterrupted view of the snowy exterior through the spaces in which our hangings did not touch the doorway. Outside, the takht-i-rawan was frozen to the ground, and needed the united efforts of the escort to detach it. The mules slipped and slid ; the cold wind was piercing as we rode from the village up towards the summit of the pass, the horses cracking at every footstep through the thin ice which had been formed in the night from the melted snow of the previous day. Up the shallow valley we rode for an hour between the ridges of the mountains ; no part of the soil was visible, all was snow and ice. My riding boots of stout leather seemed in presence of the wind as if they were made of the thinnest kid, or even muslin. The top of the pass is 8750 feet, and near

us were the peaks of Derman, or Girghish, and of Kisteh, and of other high mountains, the lowest of which rises to more than 11,000 feet above the sea level. Near the summit there was not even a track ; the way to Ispahan lay over a rocky hill, at sight of which everybody dismounted, and all began to scramble any how over the stones, the horses being left to their own unassisted judgment as to the way.

At nine o'clock, the sun was very hot, the path sloppy, and the glare upon the snow painful. Among the tops of the mountains we rode for some hours, making at last a very small descent to the Telegraph Office at Soh, where we were to pass the night. This was as usual a walled enclosure with a single opening, a door on the south side, near which stood the clerk, an Italian, and the inspector, a Scotch sergeant of Engineers. Both Signor Castaldi and Sergeant MacGowan spoke English, one with the accent of Tuscany, the other with that of an Aberdonian. They gave us a large room, which had a door, and clean matting on the floor, on which our servants quickly arranged our beds and carpets. With the thermometer 20° below freezing point, it was a drawback from the comfort of this house, that to dine with the kind and hospitable Mrs. MacGowan, we had to walk through the snowy yard.

In the morning it was too cold to ride, and we began our journey to Moot-i-Khoor on foot. The view down the slope, and over the vast plain towards

Ispahan, was splendid. Far in the distance, beyond the yet invisible city, there was another chain of mountains, and through a gap in these we could see a hill, which Sergeant MacGowan told us (and afterwards we proved the fact for ourselves) was not less than a hundred and ten miles from where we then stood.

Of our soldier attendants, we named two, who were favourites, “the Blue Man” and “the Green Man” from the colour of their dress ; the former was particularly agile and handsome. He could run up a very steep hill almost as quickly as an antelope, though loaded with his rifle, his pistol, and short sword, to say nothing of powder-flask and ramrods, which, in the most primitive fashion, were carried separately. Soon after leaving Soh, we saw him upon the craggy slope above our heads, and heard the report of his rifle. Down he came with what he called “*arduk*,” a wild duck, in his hand, which he offered to the lady in the *takht-i-rawan*, and looked somewhat astonished at her unwillingness to handle a dying and bleeding bird. It is not uncommon for European travellers to forbid their guards to fire *en route* except at an enemy, and for this we heard at least three good reasons. The report of a gun may be a signal, pre-arranged between soldiers of the guard and robbers ; at all events, it informs any robbers who may be near of the arrival of a caravan, and so attracts attention ; and again, by

emptying the gun, it for a time deprives the soldier of the use of his weapon, and in case of sudden attack leaves him unarmed. But I never interfered with the sporting tendencies of "the Blue Man." Nor could we always be thinking of the dangers of the road. Its beauties were far more apparent ; the rich colouring of morning and evening light ; the boundless space which while he is passing is all the traveller's own ; in which he may ride where he will ; it is very rarely that a patch is fenced, and the oases in the neighbourhood of villages are few and far between.

The sun was high when we reached the plain. On the bare, brown wilderness, there rose about four miles off a broken wall, the ruin of a chapar-khanah, and a small shrine, the tomb of some departed sheik. Beside these buildings we were to make the usual midday halt, and Kazem's mule exhibited his common obstinacy and performed his customary *pas seul*, when required to hasten on in front of the caravan. The mule kicked, turned round and round, but nothing could dislodge the merry little Persian. At last, a soldier undertook to drive it before him, and Kazem was soon trotting on to light a fire. Having brought us through the mountains from Kashan, and into the territory of his Royal Highness the Prince Governor of Ispahan, the soldiers were now to leave us. We gave them a present of money with which they were evidently delighted, and a note to the Governor of Kashan

stating that they had left us in safety on the road to Moot-i-Khoor. This I wrote at their especial request, which, in its urgency, reminded me of that of an Hindoo ayah, who in travelling towards England, from Alexandria to Naples, was overwhelmed with astonishment at the sight of Vesuvius. When it was explained to her that the mountain was smoking from natural causes, she exclaimed, "Mem Sahib, do give me a 'chit' (a note) to say that I've seen it." She evidently felt sure that none of her own people would believe in her account of a volcano if she could not produce a "chit" from her mistress.

The village of Moot-i-Khoor is closely surrounded by a high wall, above which nothing was visible but the green dome of a small mosque. The chapar-khanah and caravanserai were the only buildings outside the walls. I deplored the cold chiefly because the temperature was unfavourable for the enjoyment of Is-pahan melons, the perfection, the *ne plus ultra* of fruit. It seems an error on the part of Nature that this golden fruit, so luscious and refreshing, ripening late in the autumn, should be for sale when to eat melon makes one's teeth chatter. But at Moot-i-Khoor, before a large fire, I did manage to enjoy the larger part of a melon, and carried the outside to my horse, who seemed to think he had not met with anything so good for many a day. Upon leaving Moot-i-Khoor, we had but one more station before reaching Ispahan;

and after riding about one farsakh on the way to Gez we passed a caravanserai three hundred feet square, which, though for a Persian building, in excellent repair, was quite deserted. We had met with an official at Tehran, upon whose caravan a band of robbers rushed out from this caravanserai. We therefore eyed it with some anxiety ; but when we arrived there was not a living creature to be seen, and nobody could explain the cause. One supposed it was left thus desolate because it was so near Moot-i-Khoor, and therefore obtained no custom ; another said something about evil spirits ; but to the charvodor it appeared possible—and his was the wisest opinion—that it had been built without thought of water supply, and had been abandoned because no water could be had at a less distance than four miles ; and moreover nothing would grow in the neighbourhood. Much of the ground round about was covered with white salt, which in the morning looked like hoar frost, and had the unpleasant flavour of saltpetre. There was nothing remarkable or unusual at Gez, which is only sixteen miles from the city of Ispahan.





CHAPTER XVI.

Ispahan—Approach by road—Suburbs of Ispahan—A ragged bazaar—Departed greatness—The Grand Avenue—The Great Madrassee—River Zayinderud—Pipes on the bridge—Djulfa-by-Ispahan—Russia and the Armenians—Gate of Djulfa—The English missionary—Mr. Bruce's house—Armenian women—The British agent—Church Missionary school—Armenian priests—Enemies of the school—Visit to the Governor—The Prince's carriage—“The Forty Columns”—The Prince's anderoon—The Shah's eldest son—His estimate of the army—Zil-i-Sultan—His hope and fears—His Court at Ispahan—His carte de visite—The Princess's costume.

THE Persians rave about Ispahan as Spaniards do of Seyille, or Italians of Naples. “*Isfahán nisf jahán*” (“Ispahan is half the world”) says one writer; and Hakim Shefâ'ee, a poet of Ispahan, has taken even a higher flight. He has sung:

“The moving heaven of heavens is the father, and the towers
of the earth the mother;
But Ispahan, their famous child, surpasses both the one and
other.”

When we were about three miles from the city we overtook a party of priests. Several of them were mounted on white donkeys, and some were persevering in their desire to see the occupant of the takht-i-rawan. While we were riding beside them, an incident occurred which shows in a very striking manner how

little intercourse there is between the chief towns of Persia, or rather how ill-adapted the paths (there are no roads) are for much traffic. A muleteer coming from Ispahan reported that, for purposes of irrigation, a new waterway had been banked up across the track, and at once we all turned into wheatfields, and made our way round by circuitous courses. On the main track there were many bridges. But there are bridges and bridges ; these were Persian bridges, of which the most common form is a long stone thrown from bank to bank, over which only one animal could pass. The larger bridges of brick were in such a state of dilapidation that with less careful animals, or at night time, it would be highly dangerous to cross them. The mules seem to know that these are traps well calculated to break their legs, and avoid the holes in these crazy bridges with wonderful care.

We had heard much of Ispahan, and were dismayed at the wretchedness and ruin in the outskirts of the town, in the general view of which from the level of the plain there was nothing to be seen that was not of mud, except the few domes and towers, which rose but little above the low houses. The environs of Ispahan are dotted with a cordon of round towers. These are not high, or in any way extraordinary, and one would pass them with the notion that, like the village defences throughout Persia, they were suitable fortifications against enemies who had no artillery. But

these are pigeon towers, maintained, in the interests of the melon gardens, for the guano, which, after a season of occupation by hundreds of pigeons, is found inside the doors at the base. Like everything else in Persia, these towers are falling into decay ; and there are but few pigeons. Time was when there were many, and when the melon growers of Ispahan paid a considerable rent for each tower.

A stranger to Persian ways and means, seeing us fording watercourses, winding round ruined walls, passing between miserable sheds scarcely eight feet apart, would hardly suppose that by the most frequented route, we were entering the chief city of the Persian Empire. The main street of Coomassie was, according to the sketches of correspondents, hardly more barbarous than the ragged bazaar through which we rode in the suburbs of Ispahan ; in fact, we were reminded by it of the picture we had seen in the *Illustrated London News* of Coomassie. Not a few of the people were of the colour, and almost as naked, as the Ashantees. The ragged roof of boughs and straw, which was intended to cover the way, but the result of which was to chequer the path with patches of sunlight, was supported by saplings just as they were brought from plantations by the river side, and the road was such as it had pleased the population to make it. Some used it as a sewer ; others had thrown earth from the foundations of their stalls upon

it. In some places there were pools of filthy water, with a bed of mud, into which our horses' feet sank deep ; then hillocks which jerked the unwary rider in his saddle. There was improvement, not in the roadway, but in the buildings of the bazaars, as we approached the centre of the town. We avoided the principal bazaars, owing to the difficulty of passing through with the takht i-rawan. At last, we entered by a narrow gateway upon the grand avenue, which though itself a ruin, and in a city which is for the most part, in ruins, remains the glory of Ispahan.

From near the centre of the town for half a mile this avenue slopes in straight lines to the river. Six rows of large plane trees, many with signs of great age and of approaching dissolution, overshadow as many roads. I was about to write that at the sides, along the walls, are footpaths ; but in Persia there are no footpaths, or rather all ways are footpaths. The raised paths at the side may have been specially designed for foot passengers, but in a country where there is no wheeled traffic, and where no one who is of the higher classes, is ever seen far from home on foot, there are, properly speaking, no footpaths, no place in which a horse, or mule, or camel is not free to walk. The greater part of the avenue is paved ; but nearly a century must have elapsed since anything has been done to repair or replace the huge stones, which in their present disarrangement make

the road far worse than it would be if there was no paving whatever. The central road of the avenue is interrupted at three places by tanks, the masonry of which is now in ruins. These tanks hold no water except the stagnant rain or melted snow ; and where the tanks occur, the long straight line of wall at the sides of the avenue is broken with buildings, imarets, large summer-houses, with two or three apartments elevated above the wall, covered with a timber roof with large projecting eaves. In this roof, as well as in the highly-coloured decoration, there is fresh evidence of the relationship between the architecture of Persia and that of the Alhambra of Granada.

About half-way down, on the left hand, as we approached the river, we came to the *Madrassée*, or great mosque-school of Ispahan, which has the most notable dome in the city. The building itself is unimportant, constructed as usual of sun-baked bricks and plastered with mud. There is some decoration composed of coloured bricks and tiles ; but the dome, seen far and wide upon the plain, is perhaps the finest example of tile-work, and the most lamentably striking picture of ruin, in Persia. Originally it was covered with tiles, on which the prevailing colours are blue and yellow. The scroll pattern is so large that it extends over two yards of the tiling, occupying a great number of tiles for its complete exhibition. About two-thirds of the tiling are in excellent condi-

tion ; the colours bright, the pattern regular, and the effect charming ; but from the remaining third, on the south side, the tiles have completely disappeared, and the bare bedding of brown cement is exposed. For generations it has been so ; and there is no prospect of repair. No Persian seems to give a thought to the preservation of the buildings of the country.

At the end of the avenue—in which the footfall of our horses and mules had that peculiar hollow sound, so melancholy and so suggestive of departed greatness—a sound singular and solemn, which is always the reverberating accompaniment of the horseman in a scene of mingled grandeur and decay—the roads converge to the bridge, a long, straight viaduct upon high, semicircular arches of brick, by which we crossed the river. This stream, the Zayinderud—a beautiful feature in the view of Ispahan—is a river with no outfall. Prodigal of its waters from the beginning, flowing hither and thither upon the plain in half a dozen courses, wastefully filling shallow basins from which the sun carries off its waters, and in winter, claiming a bed wide enough for ten times the flow, tapped at every turn, and its waters led away to irrigate fields and gardens, the gay Zayinderud dies in the plains to the east of Ispahan.

The sides of the flat bridge are enclosed with walls about twelve feet high, which would shut out one of the most enchanting views in Persia, if they were not

pierced with small openings, so frequent that these boundaries are arcades rather than walls. There are no paths or pavement; nothing but a level way upon the bridge. At either end, from day to day and year to year, there are two Persians seated on the ground, whom at first we supposed were placed there to receive toll from passengers. They rose at our approach, and from one of the arches brought forward a lighted kalian, all ready for indulgence in the favourite form of smoking. They make this advance to any mounted passenger, and, indeed, to every one willing to pay a copper. The traveller, if he pleases, takes the pipe, and after smoking from one end of the bridge to the other, leaves it with the second pair of pipe bearers. It is a curious way of getting a living, and reminded me of that poorest of all trades in Naples, in which one member of the family passes the day picking up the chewed ends of cigars in the Via de Toledo, now Del Corso, and another offers this choice commodity for sale at ten for a halfpenny in the Marina.

At the further side of the bridge, the avenue is continued, with the plane trees and pavement as before, gently sloping upwards to its termination at the ruin of an Imperial summer-house. But in the December afternoon we turned sharply to the right, among the green patches of young wheat, to where the suburb of Djulfa borders on the river. This is the Christian quarter of Ispahan—the home of about

two thousand Armenians, the largest Christian community in Persia, who named it Djulfa, in fond remembrance of that other Djulfa upon the borders of the Caucasus, in Georgia, from whence came the ancestors of the present population. Perhaps there is not in the world any more extraordinary manifestation of the sentiment of patriotism than that which is seen among Georgians and Armenians, the very names of whose countries have been wiped out by Imperial Russia from the map, and whose nationality is scornfully regarded by the dominant Power. As a mark of the insolence of conquest, I have mentioned the monument in the Saski Place of Warsaw; but probably there is nothing in the history of Poland to equal the terms of the proclamation in which the Emperor Alexander I. of Russia announced to the Georgians, in 1801, the loss of their independence. “Ce n'est pas pour accroître nos forces, ce n'est pas dans des vues d'intérêt, ou pour étendre les limites d'un Empire déjà si vaste, que nous acceptons le fardeau du trône de Géorgie;” and the Tsar in diplomatic phraseology proceeds to add, that it is in order to extend to them the blessing of Russian Government that he has conquered the people who are, without dispute, the handsomest in the world.

It was easy to see that the Armenians of Djulfa-by-Ispahan are miserably poor, and that wine shops—very rare in the Mussulman city—are frequent in

the Christian settlement. One of the gates of Djulfa, the wooden frame of which was about seven feet six inches in height by five feet in width, would not admit the takht-i-rawan, the top of which came in violent collision with the structure. We were obliged to unharness the first mule, and slope the takht-i-rawan to the ground. By this movement, we were just able to get inside the town of Djulfa, of which the narrow ways are utterly unkept, as indeed is usual throughout Persia—quagmires of mud in the wet season, irregular blocks of frozen filth in the winter, and noisome dustheaps in the summer. Through a small maze of mud walls, past the Armenian cathedral, with its brown dome, built of sun-baked bricks, surmounted by a gilt cross, we approached the house of Mr. Bruce, the missionary—the only Englishman resident in this part of Persia, where the British Government is represented by an Armenian agent, subordinate to the Envoy in Tehran. The missionary's house is thoroughly Persian, and from the street in which we set down the takht-i-rawan, there was nothing visible except the line of mud-wall common to this and the adjoining houses. But unlike most Persian houses, the strong doors, studded with iron bolts, were, as is usual with Mr. Bruce's doors, standing wide open. In Persian eyes the construction would indeed be faulty if anything of the interior could be seen through this one opening of communication with the outer world. There is

always a turn in the dark, covered entry. We had been met outside the town, by one of Mr. Bruce's servants, Kalifat by name, an intelligent youth mounted on a white pony, who could speak English with some readiness, and was himself inclined to walk in the ways of the Anglican Church. Before the door of the house stood the missionary, the centre of a small crowd of his Armenian neighbours, no longer booted and spurred, but all in clerical black, with orthodox white tie, a man who deserves as much as any one in Persia a brief description of the character and personal influence which he brings to bear upon so wide and desolate a field of action. Tall and spare, with the keen eye and the strong hand of one accustomed to rural life from childhood, frank in face, and with winning, well-bred manner, Mr. Bruce is quite an exceptional missionary. One sees at a glance that the man is by nature a theological soldier, with a particular taste for religious warfare in the remotest places of the earth. Capable of enduring immense fatigue, accustomed in boyhood to more or less reckless riding in an Irish county, gentle in temper, firm and broadly liberal in argument, with gustatory tastes so simple that the worst of Affghan or Persian fare is always sufficient, a laborious scholar, already better acquainted with Persian dialects than any other of our countrymen in Persia, the one missionary in that Empire is, in his way, a remarkable man.

On passing through the covered entry we came upon the quadrangle of his house, in the centre of which there were bunches of the pretty little flower which at home we call "Michaelmas daisy," and the invariable tank. A paved terrace surrounded the square patch of garden, on the side of which next the street were three rooms of the house. The first, a vaulted, whitewashed chamber, about five-and-thirty feet long, had two doors opening upon the narrow terrace. This answered to what in English farm-houses is called the "keeping" room, at once drawing-room, dining-room, and library. The missionary's books, all of them more or less relating to his calling, were ranged in those recesses which are always constructed in the walls of Persian rooms. The only decoration was a native painting of queer animals, with some likeness to birds, over the fireplace, upon the floor of which there was a cheerful fire of logs. Between this and a similar apartment, occupied by ourselves, there was an intermediate and smaller room, which, like the others, opened upon the terrace, and in front of which we had always to pass under the sky in going from our apartment to the "keeping" room. On the right of the quadrangle, which was perhaps a hundred and twenty feet square, there were the kitchen offices, and a small staircase, leading first to an ante-room, and through that, to the grand room of the house, which was used as a chapel.

The Christian subjects of Mahomedan Powers always adopt to some extent the customs of their masters. The Armenian women at Djulfa veil their chins and expose their painted cheeks and dyed eyebrows. Every morning at eight there was a procession of these women, draped from head to foot in coverings of spotless white, into the missionary's room. The few boys and men made a louder clatter, and all left their shoes on the terrace outside the door before they entered to hear the missionary recite prayers and read the Bible in Persian; and on Sunday many of these people came to an early service in the same language. They were men and boys exclusively who attended the afternoon service, when the missionary read the familiar liturgy in English, and preached with pleasant simplicity and engaging earnestness, usually, however, choosing some dogma or miracle, the truth of which he declared in detail with much of the minuteness and determination of the school of Calvin. To hear and to appreciate the labours of Mr. Bruce, expounding to converted Armenians the indispensable connexion between "the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham" and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, was very instructive as to the strength and the weakness of the teaching of dogmatic Christianity.

The British agent, an Armenian, named Agenoor, was the first person to call upon us. I gave him a

letter addressed to himself by his official chief in Tehran, and another from the Grand Vizier addressed to the Prince-Governor of Ispahan, which I requested him to forward to his Royal Highness, who is the eldest son of the Shah. Mr. Agenoor is a respectable but timid little man, who seems to gain all the strength he has from his connexion with the British Government. A walk through London or a sight of the British fleet in Turkish waters, would strengthen his nerves. England is to him and to many such who are placed in positions of much importance, powerful only by report, while the Mahomedan authority surrounds them as an existing reality, and the misery of their fellow-Christians is before them as an ever-present warning. There are many disadvantages in the representation of Great Britain by members of the subject Christian races of the East.

We visited the missionary's school, in which we were soon afterwards to take an unexpected interest. We were much pleased with the excellence of the teaching and its admirable results. The class-rooms were in a house adjoining that of Mr. Bruce, and very similar in construction. The schoolmaster, Kalifat Johannes, was a native of Djulfa, who had for years enjoyed the position, to gain which is the chief motive power in all self-improvement among these Armenians. He had been in India and had there learnt the art of tuition. In the Djulfa school, there were at the time of our

visit a hundred and thirty-one pupils, of whom all but three Mussulman children were Armenians. The poor people of Djulfa warmly appreciated the benefits of this school for their boys as a means of enabling their children to emigrate from poverty-stricken Persia to India, from whence there flowed back rills of pecuniary aid to embarrassed parents in Djulfa. Religious conformity with the tenets of the Church Missionary Society of Great Britain, by which the school was entirely maintained, was not enforced as a test of admission. As a matter of fact many of the children so educated did find their way on Sunday to join with their schoolmaster in Mr. Bruce's services, but not all; and there were even children of Armenian priests among the pupils.

The satisfaction of the people with the school was not, however, shared by the priests of the Armenian population, nor by the Roman Catholic priest, who rules a dwindling community in Djulfa. There are no fewer than sixteen priests, including a bishop of the Armenian Church, in this wretched suburb; and all these, with their families, have to obtain a living as unproductive creatures, from the piety of a population little above beggary. Naturally they are more than dubious as to the advantage of training the boys of Djulfa in schools established by members of the Church of England, with the probable result of making them Anglicans in religion and the likelihood that

the flower of them, the most promising of the future wealth-makers of Djulfa, will leave the valley of the Zayinderud and emigrate to British India. There could be no more obvious menace to their means of living, and to these poor priests it is the more aggravating because there is nothing that each one of them so much desires for himself as to be sent to minister to some Armenian flock in the land of rupees. They say that the Armenian bishop never sends a priest to India who does not first lay at his episcopal feet an offering of fifty tomans ; and if any kind person were to give an Armenian priest of Djulfa the sum of twenty pounds, it is not at all unlikely it would find its way to the bishop, so that the giver might obtain translation to India.

For some time past, Mr. Bruce told us, the school had been regarded as an offence by the priests of Djulfa, who, conscious of their own political insignificance, had not scrupled to arouse Mahomedan feeling by denouncing the school to the moollahs as an English engine for the destruction of Islam. In this evil work, I have no doubt that the Roman Catholic priest lent a willing hand ; and perhaps it was not unnatural he should do so when he compared his miserable school with the comparatively bountiful appliances of that ruled by the English missionary.

We had forwarded our letters of recommendation to the Prince-Governor, who immediately sent ferashes

to the missionary's house to be my personal attendants during our stay in Ispahan. It was quite in accordance with Persian custom that I should give them a present and send them back, as I did. On the day upon which the Prince was to receive us, more servants arrived and brought news that the Prince's carriage was on the way in order to convey my wife to visit the Princess. We knew that the gate of Djulfa, which had stopped the takht-i.rawan, would not admit a carriage; we therefore hired mules and set out, a large party, including the British Agent and the missionary, our servants and those of the Prince, all on horseback, surrounding the takht-i.rawan. When we arrived in the open fields by the river, there stood the Prince's carriage, drawn by two white horses, the manes and tails of which were dyed a lively red. They had spots of the same colour upon the forehead, which, if they had been men, would have given them the look of a clown at a circus. As for the carriage itself, in hardly any sale-yard in London could such a wretched rattle-trap be found. The lining was torn and hung in large rectangular rents, and this was only the most striking "note" of the general condition of the vehicle. It was not inviting, but the anxious British Agent thought the Prince would be offended if "the lady" did not make use of the carriage. So the change was made, and my wife had an opportunity of learning by painful experience

why it is that wheeled carriages are not used in Persia. The postilion set off delighted. The barb-like horses switched their red tails and dashed down a steep place into the river, the carriage banging about over the boulders in the bed of the Zayinderud to the satisfaction of no one but the postilion. No doubt it was as good as any other road, and perhaps he rarely got an opportunity of displaying his powers as a charioteer. We, however, caught him, and compelled him to walk his horses for the rest of the way; but even this pace over the stones of the avenue was described by the unfortunate occupant of the carriage as being almost unendurable.

We stopped at a mud-wall in which there was a gate, not large enough to admit the carriage, and all dismounted because my wife was obliged to do so. Above the gateway, a patch of the mud was smooth and whitened. On this was painted a large heraldic lion, with his head in the rays of a gilded sun, the sign of Persian royalty. We had some distance to walk to the palace through ill-kept grounds, in which there were many plane trees. The low buildings of the palace, in the distance, were in no way attractive. They presented a long straight wall towards the garden, divided in panels, covered with fine white plaster, and decorated in fantastic patterns, coloured red, blue, and yellow. About the centre of the grounds, there was a building which is regarded as

one of the sights of Ispahan. It is a pavilion, the roof supported at a height of about fifty feet by twenty columns of wood, the octagonal surfaces of these columns being covered with mirrors. The floor was of various coloured marbles, and the roof, which was fast falling into decay, was highly coloured in kaleidoscopic patterns. The building is known as "the Forty Columns," and was probably constructed to be used as an out-door throne room for "the Shadow of God." There is in it an admixture of the barbaric and the tawdry, which, together with the unsubstantial character of the building, are the usual characteristics of Persian architecture. At a distance the effect is very pleasing, and one sees that "the Forty Columns" would play a grand part in Persian pageantry, but nearer the illusion vanishes; the floor is unwashed, the mirrors are grimy, the tall slender columns are awry, and the roof is falling to pieces.

During the short time we stayed at "the Forty Columns," a number of people, only some of whom were of the Prince's household, gathered round us, and not a few followed towards the palace. In a theocratic government, which is the real nature of authority in all Mahomedan countries, one notes the mixture of democracy with absolute authority. There are two powers—that of Allah and that of the Shah, ruling in the name of Allah, and in strict accordance with his will as revealed in the Koran. In the

sight of Allah, all men are equal, and among men, none are great save those who wield his power. Servants, peasants, beggars, all went with us towards the presence of the Prince. Not one of these people would understand exclusion, except as an arbitrary exercise of power; not one would resent it, because he who has power may do what he pleases, and if the Prince had singled out any one, and ordered the ferashes to give him a "hundred sticks," there would have been no outcry of injustice. But until repelled, they feel they have as much right to be in the Governor's room as the flies which buzz about his head.

We separated in the first court of the palace, my wife being led to the "anderoon," or "harem," the women's quarter, while I passed to the rooms of the Prince. He was not there, and I was received by members of his household, including his *hakim*, or doctor, an agreeable young man, who spoke some French. The Prince was, in fact, taking an unfair advantage of me, and availing himself of the customs of the East and West. While it would have been in the highest degree improper for me to propose a visit on my own part to the anderoon, the Prince, with laudable curiosity, received my wife there, and himself presented her to his wife, the only one whom he had then married. A pipe was passed round while we waited for his Highness, and those of the population who could not crowd into the corners of the little

room, watched us through the open doorway. It was presently announced that the Prince was ready, and we passed through another court, the doors of which were covered with cotton hangings, and up two high steps into a narrow passage, in which stood a servant supporting the hangings before the doorway of the room in which the Governor of Ispahan was seated. There was a clatter of shoes, which were left in a heap on the threshold, and the Prince, a youthful likeness of his father, rose from his armchair to shake hands with me and to place me in the chair next to himself. He has exactly the bold dark eye of the Shah, which I am told is the family feature of the Kajar tribe, and his face, though hardly so pleasing, has the same look of good-nature, with evidence of an unexhausted appetite for enjoyment and consciousness of arbitrary power. The breast of his frock-coat was covered with jewels, his waistbelt blazed with rubies and diamonds, and when he resumed his seat, he laid across his knees a richly-jewelled sword. He had plainly placed himself for the occasion in full dress, and was anxious to escape from his load of jewels.

Our conversation proceeded in the usual way. I said that having had the honour of meeting his Majesty the Shah at several entertainments in London, I felt very happy in being thus kindly received in Persia by his eldest son, who so much resembled

his Majesty. The Prince replied with an unmeaning flourish of compliments, and then expressed his fear that we found travelling in Persia very difficult. "There is no railway," he said, in a tone which seemed to repeat the apparent belief of the Governor of Kashan that Englishmen and railways were inseparable. He never said a word to indicate that he had seen my wife, and that he had just left her in the "anderoon;" that would have been a breach in the code of Persian manners. "Here we have everything ~~as~~ from Nature," he observed, when I told him that we had enjoyed our journey the more because there were no railways. I spoke of the physique of the Shah's soldiers. "Yes," he said, "Allah be praised, the army is very good; my father has five crores (a Persian crore is 500,000) of soldiers." He uttered this monstrous exaggeration so quietly that one could see he was utterly ignorant of the real meaning of numbers. He attributed everything to Allah. It was Allah's will that Persia should be afflicted with famine, therefore it was useless to take means against it, but his father had given two or three millions of tomans (another tremendous exaggeration) in relief, and "now, Mashallah! there was no famine."

The dialogue was interrupted by the appearance of a richly-jewelled kalian, from which, after I had refused it, the Prince drew a few puffs of smoke.

It then passed away, and in the corridor I could see that the attendants were handing about this royal pipe among themselves with a freedom which is certainly Oriental. The Prince was much inclined to talk, but with one exception, I had always to start the subject of conversation. That exception was Don Carlos, in whose contest for the Crown of Spain the Prince evidently took intense interest. He asked me how many men Don Carlos had, and expressed an earnest hope that this pretender would soon be in Madrid. I fancy there was something of a personal character in the feeling he had for Don Carlos, and that he was thinking of himself, and of the Imperial throne of Persia, while he followed with such curious ardour the fortunes of the civil war in Spain.

This eldest son of the Shah, who is now about twenty-seven years of age, is known, and is always spoken of by the title "Zil-i-Sultan" (Shadow of the King), a title of honour given him by his father, "the Shadow of God." But though first-born, he is not Crown Prince. In Persia, the Shah names whom he pleases as his successor; and his Majesty has long since designated his son by his second wife to that position, and has confirmed the heirship by informing the Powers of his selection, and by making this second son Governor of Tabriz, a position always held by the heir to the throne. The reason given for

passing over the natural claims of the Zil-i-Sultan is one usually accepted in Persia as quite sufficient—he is not, and his brother is, the son of a princess. But the Zil-i-Sultan is a vigorous, violent, headstrong young man, accustomed from his earliest manhood to hold in his hands virtually irresponsible power of life and death—a being, in his own opinion, and in the eyes of his followers, superior to all laws; a bold sportsman, with the ambition to be a warrior; a man with abundant capacity for matching the cruelties with which the pages of Persian history are red; and yet the bad rearing, the indulgence of untaught self-will, which has developed his very strong natural impulses into tyrannical ferocity, has not bereft him of genial good humour, the natural accompaniment of high health, so evident as to win for him some devoted followers, and to please all to whom he wishes to be gracious.

He is supposed not to acquiesce in the devolution of the crown upon his brother's head, and is said to have expressed his determination to fight for it upon his father's death.. But his vagaries, which have been many and serious, are held to have destroyed any chance of success which his undoubtedly superior vigour might have given him. No man better understands that which failure involves, even upon suspicion of an attempt in this line. Blindness, with perhaps some other mutilation, or death, is the lot of rivals of

the Kajar tribe, when the successful one attains supreme power ; and in Persia it is not as in Europe—flight is unthought of. Outside Persia, there is no world for fugitives of royal blood.

While we were taking coffee, I had leisure to observe the surroundings of the Zil-i-Sultan. At his feet sat an old moollah, one of the great religious authorities of Ispahan, who seemed to consider that any attention on his part to what was going on would be an improper subtraction from his duty to Islam. His bright eyes were overshadowed with a huge white turban ; he sat on his heels, and I am sure lamented, as a sign of decadence, the elevation of the Prince and that of his visitor in chairs. Beside the Prince stood his Vizier, or *vakeel*, a man dressed as one of high authority, and with a face full of intelligence and power. My servant, Kazem, in right of his position, had squeezed himself into the little room, and squatted in a corner ; there were a few others, including the British Agent, who acted as interpreter, and Mr. Bruce. When I rose to leave, the Prince called for pen and ink, and wrote his name and mine on the back of a photographic likeness of himself, which he presented to me as a souvenir ; and then, after shaking hands, turned to the missionary, and desired him to remain. Intelligence was conveyed to the anderoon, and my wife returned to me, attended by two negroes, the peculiar guardians of that place, men

of horrible ugliness. She had been received very kindly by the Princess, who, with bare legs, was seated upon cold pavement, which had but a thin covering of cloth. Her Highness's face was painted with red and black, not in tints, but in large patches ; and though a young woman, she had that greatest of beauties in a Persian lady—excessive obesity. Her two black-eyed children were introduced, and the usual refreshments were provided.

END OF VOL. I.

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